

TOP STORY: *Hooked on self-help books*

April 5 - 18, 1993

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

“E
very
lawbreaker
can point to
scars from the
past and claim
exculpation.
And if all are
excused, who is
responsible?”

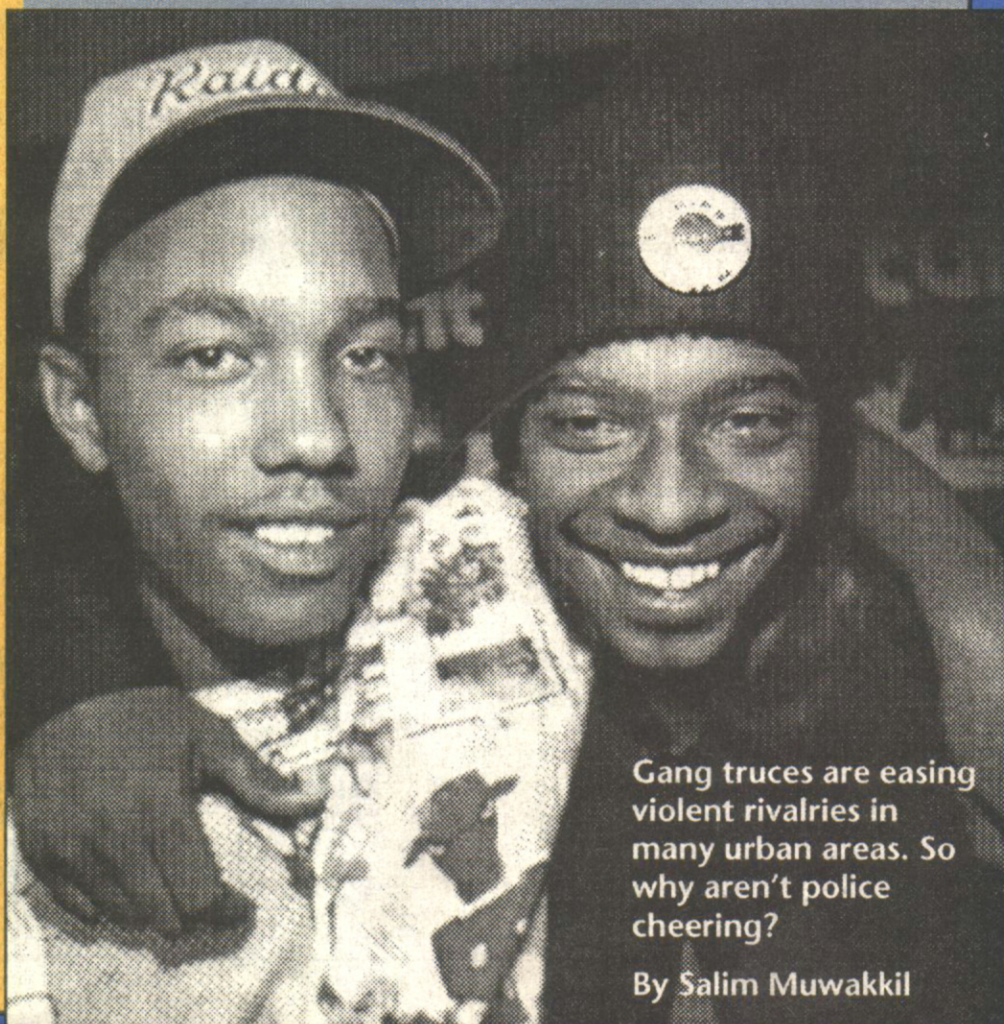
PAGE 19

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GANGING TOGETHER

© Ted Soqui



Gang truces are easing violent rivalries in many urban areas. So why aren't police cheering?

By Salim Muwakkil

EDITORIAL

TIME TO STOP PAYING FOR ISRAELI APARTHEID

In 1948, Israel's founders forced more than 300,000 Palestinians out of their native land—using tactics that Simha Flappan, the late founder of the Israeli magazine *New Outlook*, said “ranged from economic and psychological warfare to the systematic ousting of the Arab population by the army.”

At the time, some liberal and socialist Israelis protested. Among them was Yaakov Hazan, a leader of the socialist organization Hashomir Hatzair and its political party, MAPAM. Hazan passionately condemned the inhumane treatment of Arabs by his countrymen. “The phenomenon of peasants fleeing from their land is without parallel,” he wrote. Yet not only Haganah (the unofficial Israeli defense force), but “all parts of the Israeli public” had participated in driving the Arabs out, in clear violation of the new nation's official democratic principles.

For participation in the killing, plundering and raping in Arab villages, Israel would “pay a harsh political and moral price,” Hazan predicted. The “poison [that] is being injected into our lives,” he wrote, “won't stop with the end of the war.” Indeed, he warned that unless a united labor movement of Arabs and Jews could be built, the final result would be a kind of Jewish fascism, and Israel would end up similar to South Africa.

Forty-five years and four wars later, Hazan's predictions seem eerily prescient. Israel, which is now by far the most powerful state in the Mideast, treats Palestinians within its own borders as inferior beings and rules the territories seized during the 1967 war in much the same way that South Africa ruled blacks before its recent liberalization.

But despite Israel's military power, it has gained neither security nor peace. This, too, was predicted in 1948. As Palestinian leader Nimr al-Hawari then told Eliyahu Sasson, a founder of the Jewish state, Israel had made the Palestinians into “vagabonds with nothing to lose and nothing to fear.” As long as they remained dispossessed and disinherited outside their homes, Hawari told Sasson, Palestinians would constantly “be on the lookout for an opportunity to bounce back and destroy your security; they will remain forever, infiltrating your borders, chasing and getting chased, killing and getting killed, stealing and getting robbed.”

And so it has gone, as it must in a war of resistance to an overwhelmingly more powerful enemy. By turning a war by

a homeless people for a land of their own into a war of expansion against indigenous people, Israel has driven the Palestinians into their own diaspora.

The issue has long ceased to be one of survival for Israel. At least since 1988, the Palestinians, through the Palestine Liberation Organization, have accepted the terms of UN Resolution 242, which calls for “withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied in the [1967] conflict,” and for the right of Israel “to live in peace

within recognized and secure borders.”

But unbending opposition by Israel's major parties to Palestinian self-determination has escalated the level of frustration and desperation on both sides. In just three months since Israel expelled 415 members of Hamas—a group opposed to the more moderate policies of the PLO—Israelis have killed 63 Palestinians and Palestinians have murdered 10 Israelis. In the first half of March, six Israelis and five Palestinians died in a spurt of violence that shook both sides and led Israel's environment minister, Yossi Sarid, a member of the left-wing Meretz party, to urge that the Gaza Strip be turned over to the Palestinians to become a PLO-led independent state.

The question now is how to end Israeli intransigence, so that a just and peaceful solution can be achieved. The Palestinians, represented by the PLO, have given every indication that they are prepared to accept international guarantees for Israeli security, and to live in peace as neighbors in a West

Bank and Gaza state of their own. Many within Israel share or are moving toward agreement with this position. And an overwhelming majority of the nations of the world support a two-state solution. Indeed, without the support and encouragement to the United States, Israel's ruling parties would be unable to continue their war of attrition against the Palestinian people.

Washington now gives Israel each year upward of \$3 billion—20 percent of all U.S. foreign aid.

Without this money, Israel's current policies would long ago have bankrupted the nation. In other words, the United States shares responsibility with Israel for the continuation of the war and for the oppression of the Palestinian people.

Is this what we want our government to do? ◀

Forty-five years ago, Israel ended Jewish statelessness. In the process it forced the Palestinians into a new diaspora.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Different drummers

We read your recent book review (*ITT*, Feb. 8) and letters (*ITT*, March 8) on the "men's movement" and have read a great deal about it in general over the past few years. I have been a feminist since I figured out what one was. My husband occasionally attends a "men's group," sans drums and Bly rhetoric.

It strikes us that there seem to be two rather distinct groups within this so-called movement. Group one is made up of men who we call '60s men. That is, they see themselves as part of the values of that time and have to one degree or another internalized the feminist message about the destructiveness of the male role in this culture. This group participates in "men's groups" largely, as one friend put it, to find a bunch of neat guys to

hang out with, to go to plays with and maybe to go camping with (but not to talk about the three B's—boobs, baseball and buns). These men realize that patriarchy and the competitive model have kept them from being friends and they form groups to have close intimate relationships with men. (My husband often notes that men are not supposed to walk together in the woods unless they are drinking beer. I often notice that at the university where he works, men from other places in the world gather in large groups to discuss politics, life, philosophy—you name it—but no such groups of American men exist.)

Certainly, in these "type one" men's groups, men sometimes talk about their parents, fathers especially, childhood, etc., but not with the idea of bashing women. Rather, they are discussing a subject that has been largely taboo among men, namely the pains they experienced growing up. They talk

about lots of other things, too, as they are forming relationships in a more natural way than getting naked with a bunch of strangers who have paid Bly or whomever large sums of money to help them hate their mothers.

Group two, which is led by Robert Bly, is comprised of two subgroups. First, men who have no roots in the '60s or feminism and, second, men who, like Bly, are reacting against their previous feminist leanings. As Susan Faludi points out, Bly was a feminist until he couldn't get attention for it anymore. Then he began petulantly blaming mothers and women for emasculating men. Men with no feminist background are easily led by this basically misogynistic propaganda, and both of us have met these men as well. They are easy to spot. Their message, like Bly's, is that it's all the fault of women.

The letters in your March 8 issue are largely from group two. Although they claim sympathy with feminism, their rhetoric and petulant tone belies the claim. But we have read letters from the other group, too. To the ones who are finding their humanity, we say "Salud!" To the others, we say try reading *The Second Sex* and *The Feminine Mystique*, and come back and we'll talk in about 10 years when you've caught up. In the meantime, quit whining, grow up and quit blaming patriarchy on your mommy.

Mary Kay Ryan
Brian P. Nichols

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Don't apologize

I agree with Salim Muwakkil's defense of Martin Luther King Jr. (*ITT*, Jan. 25), but I am troubled that Muwakkil is so apologetic. I, too, am an African-American of Muwakkil's generation. In the '70s I rejected nationalism for a universal progressive philosophy. I've worked in coalition with nationalists in the past and expect to in the future, but I do find it annoying when these brothers and sisters refuse to accept that some of us just don't agree with them. The world's preoccupation with racial, religious and ethnic differences is nuts!

For a quarter-century, conservatives have dominated white America. Careers have been built on criticism of the Great Society, but what have conservatives actually done? Similarly, for a quarter-century, nationalists have dominated black America. Careers have been built on criticism of "integrationists," but what have nationalists actually done?

Dr. King confronted racists from Alabama to Chicago, protested the Vietnam War, organized poor people and was helping striking workers in Memphis when he was assassinated. It is the establishment that seeks to reduce King to a feckless "dreamer." It is absurd to blame our current difficulties on King's ideas when those ideas have been ridiculed and put down for a quarter-century. In my experience, nationalist posturing is often a "cover" for doing nothing, and it's a good bet that some of those students condemning Martin Luther King today will be apologizing for scoundrels like Clarence Thomas and sucking up to the military-industrial complex tomorrow.

Alex Walker
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Social ills

Reading "Socialized medicine is good business" (*ITT*, Jan. 25) brought

to mind an incident with our doctor in 1980, when we lived in Florida. We had just finished my annual physical. I told him that I was shifting our insurance coverage to a local health maintenance organization (HMO), which any doctor could join. He regretted that he could no longer be our doctor because, in his opinion, HMOs represented socialized medicine.

After a good laugh, I reminded him that about 90 percent of his patients were on Medicare. He responded that he was forced into Medicare, but he would not willingly join a plan where he could not set his own fees. However, as a "professional courtesy" to my wife, a medical technologist, he had agreed not to bill us beyond what our insurance allowed. He declined to extend that courtesy to the HMO. We changed doctors.

Later, I shifted to a national insurer with a preferred provider care (PPC) provision containing agreed-on fees. In Florida, some PPC doctors billed above the fees. We moved to Texas last year. Here, so far, our PPC billings equal the fees.

Raising standards of living with health care is denounced by mossy-backs as socialized medicine. But doing the same with defense contracts is proclaimed as sound industrial policy. What is the difference? Both require tax dollars. Fewer guns and more health care sounds good to me. Until something better comes along, let's go with socialized medicine.

Ken Loveless
Austin, Texas

Appalled

I read and subscribe to *In These Times* because of the quality of its perspective. Your stories are careful and full of concern for the causes and exploitation of human suffering in the world. However, your Appall-O-Meter column is a cold and jarring exception. In that, you move callously back and forth from a harmless funny item to "funny" items that exploit suffering for a yuk. "Godzilla's spawn" in

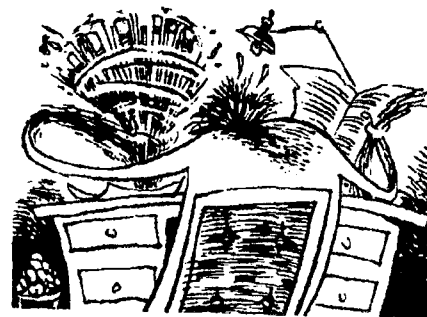
the March 8 issue is only one example. Poking fun at Japanese programmers and their lame attempt to deal with a sickeningly violent crime is the sort of paralysis and decontextualization that makes this column a blood relative of those "nihilistic techno-nerds" who perpetrated this monstrosity. You exhibit both alienated voyeuristic pleasure and distance and superiority to suffering. Is the horror of those families who received their daughter's teeth in the mail also included in your scoring on the Appall-O-Meter? Lose the low po-mo leering in this column, lose the cheap exploitation, or lose me, for one, who subscribes partly to avoid the frigid pseudo-hip "humor" growing more and more common in "left" journals. Don't pillory nihilism when you're it.

Guy Senese
DeKalb, Ill.

Corrections

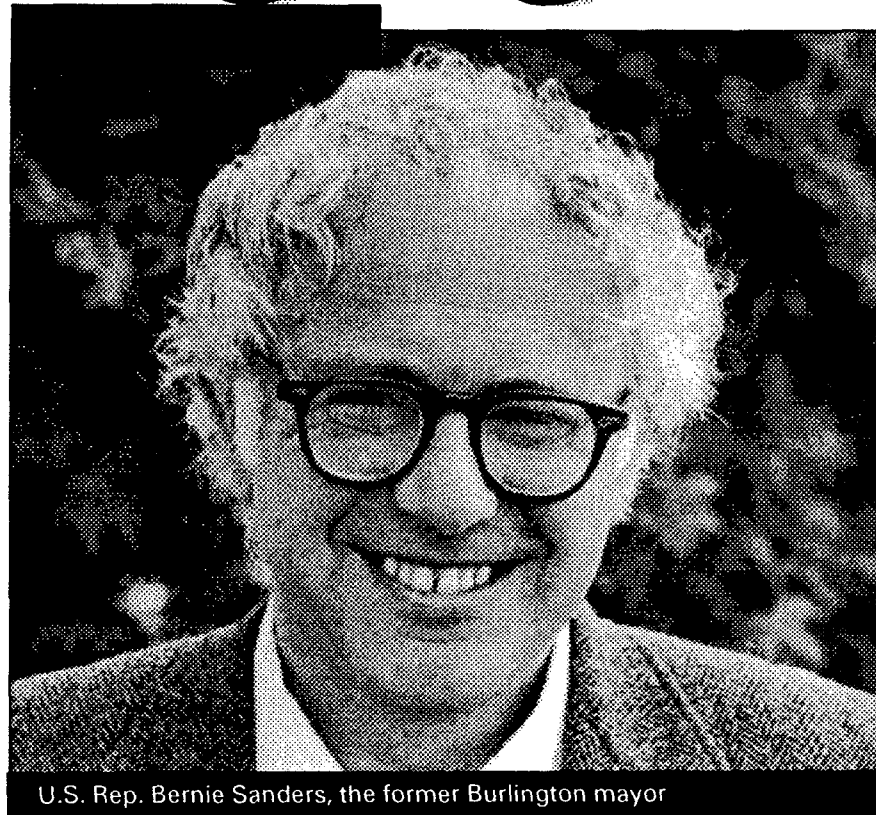
In a February 22 review of his book, *Black Power Ideologies*, author John T. McCartney's ethnicity was incorrectly identified. He is, in fact, a black man.

John Canham-Clyne's article, "Uncle Sam's Blind Eye," in our February 22 edition contained erroneous information about the shutdown of the State Department's Office of Public Safety. Congress closed the office in 1975.



Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders, the former Burlington mayor

LEFT OUT

Vermont's Progressive Coalition suffers unexpected defeat

The People's Republic of Burlington has fallen. After six consecutive mayoral election victories, the Progressive Coalition unexpectedly lost control of Vermont's largest city in early March.

Republican City Councilor Peter Brownell scored a comfortable but stunning victory over incumbent Mayor Peter Clavelle. In 1989, Clavelle succeeded fellow Progressive Bernie Sanders, who now occupies Vermont's sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Even though the Democrats sat out the race this time around and the Burlington GOP was running its first citywide campaign in a decade, Clavelle sensed that he might be beaten by the moderately conservative Brownell. In an interview a month prior to the March 2 balloting, Clavelle acknowledged that he could be seen as having embarked on "a political kamikaze mission." The balding and mustachioed 43-year-old mayor proved prophetic in his suggestion that a critical mass of voters could be lost as a result of his advocacy of



By Woody Igou

Dic.....tator

Radio commentator Paul Harvey recently gave glowing tribute to a "president" who had



served six terms, turned his country's economic policy around and created an orderly

society. Mr. Harvey was speaking of President Suharto of Indonesia, who was brought to power in a military coup and since that time has been re-elected on six occasions ... unopposed. Members of the assembly that elect him are hand-picked by the president. His new vice president, Try Sutrisno, vigorously advocates that the military should play a prominent role in governing the country.

And now you know the rest of the story.

Adam Smith (and Wesson)

In opposing a bill in the Virginia Legislature to limit the purchase of handguns to one per month per individual, NRA



Executive Director Wayne LaPierre stated, "Buying guns is legal in this country. No

one says you can only read one newspaper a month. No one says you can only go to church once a month."

Stand real close to the Waco compound and say that.

Guns don't kill people, rumors do

NRA lobbyist David Gibbens recently resigned after he acknowledged spreading false rumors about the alleged drunk driving of Attorney General Janet Reno.



He had whispered the innuendos to Senate Republican aides and *Roll Call* magazine prior to Reno's confirmation hearings. Janet, we hope, has an elephant's memory.

Global vultures

Entertainment Weekly reports that CNN learned profitable lessons from the Gulf War. Just prior to the allied air strikes on Iraq this year, CNN sales reps



called advertisers and asked the following questions: (1) Do you still want to be on the air if we're at war? (2) If yes, would you like to buy more time? and (3) If yes, we'll give you "Instate News Rate," based upon Nielsen overnights.

Look for future litigation over CNN's "expanded" definition of war. ("...and now, from our almost-war correspondent Wolf Blitzer.")

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, in These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

both a property tax increase and a controversial measure that provides health insurance coverage to the "domestic partners" of city employees.

Timing counts for a lot in politics. And many Progressives and Republicans alike agree that Clavelle badly misjudged the moment by espousing two unpopular positions in the run-up to his rendezvous with the electorate.

Demographic trends also led to the Progressives' defeat. About two-fifths of Burlington's 40,000 residents now live in a largely suburban ward. This fastest-growing section of the city is populated mainly by middle-class homeowners who do not share the Progressives' economic or cultural beliefs. Brownell piled up such a huge majority in this area that it enabled him to prevail on election day. Burlington's older, poorer and comparatively static neighborhoods remained faithful to the Progressives. But turnout there was down substantially from previous local elections during the Progressives' 12-year tenure in City Hall.

That factor suggests that Clavelle alienated a significant number of culturally conservative working-class Burlingtonians. They may be roughly categorized as Catholic French-Canadians who like U.S. Rep. Sanders' egalitarian economic message but have no sympathy for the demands of gays and lesbians.

Opposition to domestic-partners proposals has been evident of late in other cities with a reputation for liberalism. This measure, which is widely seen as benefiting lesbians and gays, reportedly contributed to the defeat of Irvine, Calif., Mayor Larry Agran, who sought the Democratic presidential nomination last year. Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn vetoed a domestic partners bill that had been approved by the City Council. And David Dinkins has so far refrained from pushing the same sort of equal-treatment legislation, despite pressure to do so on the part of New York's large gay and lesbian community.

Although their timing could have been better, Burlington's Progressives understood all along that the domestic partners proposal, approved in January, could cost them the election. They pressed forward with it nonetheless, out of a conviction that it was the right thing to do. As George Thabault, Clavelle's former assistant, put it some months ago, "There's no point in us having power unless we do radical things with it."

Brownell came across as a non-threatening alternative. The 44-year-old Air Force veteran is a professional numbers-cruncher at the local General Electrics weapons plant. He promised to avoid tax increases during his two-year term and to focus city government on what he describes as "the four essentials": police, fire, schools and streets.

Vermont pundits are feverishly speculating that Clavelle's defeat could lead to Sanders' loss of the state's sole House seat. But it appears more likely that voters' rejection of the uncharismatic Clavelle will have no effect on the fortunes of the still-fiery Sanders. The independent socialist has a visceral appeal to many working-class voters.

The Progs' prognosis locally is not favorable, however. Their chances of recapturing Burlington City Hall in 1995 are limited by the lack of an obvious replacement for Clavelle as a mayoral candidate. The coalition is also experiencing internal strains, which had largely been kept from public view until recriminations started flying in the aftermath of the election defeat.

Much will depend, of course, on how Brownell performs in office. But regardless of his record, the rejuvenated Democrats are likely to field a mayoral candidate two years hence. That could set off a wild three-way scramble for which all sorts of outcomes can be envisioned.

—Kevin J. Kelley

THE GREENS' BLUES

French elections disastrous for the ecology party

The biggest shock in the March 21 French elections was the collapse of the Green vote to a tiny 7.6 percent, well below the Communists and barely more than half what the racist National Front managed. The Socialists' defeat was predictable in a country gripped by pessimism, but the failure of the ecologists to maintain either their voting score of 15 percent in 1992 regional elections or the 20 percent they had in the opinion polls two months ago is the key that opened the way to the right's massive victory.

Even the right's victory needs some qualification. No single party obtained more than 20 percent of the vote. The divisions of the right over Europe, over the constitution and over social politics will quickly make the giant but extremely heterogeneous majority of the new government far less sturdy than its crushing electoral success would indicate.

In addition, the 1995 presidential election is still the more important contest. France is moving toward an American separation of powers with a presidency and a legislature in different hands. Voters could vote right knowing that Socialist President Francois Mitterrand remained in the Elysee with big constitutional powers. One in three French voters stayed at home—a low turnout that suggests French voters are downgrading the importance of national assembly elections.

Mitterrand went off serenely to play golf on the day after the electoral disaster for the party he shaped in the '70s and led to power in 1981. The new government has to deal with mass unemployment, agricultural protection, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), relations with Germany and the United States, as well as race and immigration issues whipped up by the National Front, which scored 12.5 percent. The cautious, anti-triumphalist declarations of the new majority underlined that they have no convincing answers to any of these problems. Mitterrand thus can bide his time. None of this is any comfort to the Socialists, reduced to a rump of 60 to 80 seats in the 550-seat national assembly.

Like their German comrades in the '80s, the French Greens appear to attract a protest vote but are not seen as a serious potential governing party. They denounce the prevailing political system with such vigor and style that their desire to enter into its governance appears contradictory. Optimism and growth provide the soil necessary for Green growth. The dark, pessimistic mood of France in 1993 was the worst time possible for the Greens to advance.

The collapse of the Green vote calls into question reforms of the Socialist Party proposed by Michel Rocard. A darling of the Paris media, Rocard has positioned himself as the modernizer of French left politics for two decades. His vote collapsed in his own constituency and he may not survive the second round of voting. His reaction was to announce himself a candidate for the presidency, and he remains the Socialists' most popular presidential candidate.

But according to his biographer, Franz-Olivier Giesbert, Mitterrand is reported to have said he would vote for his dog to be president of France before Michel Rocard. Mitterrand's preferred successor is Jacques Delors. Thus, despite the crushing victory for the right in France, the politics of the Socialist Party will continue to be central to the country at least until the presidential election in 1995 decides whether the French right is back in total power for a generation or more.

—Denis MacShane

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Listen to lambchop

When the star of the congressional hearing is a hand puppet, the subject must be children's television.

At a mid-March hearing led by Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), puppeteer Shari Lewis read the riot act to the TV industry for failing to provide educational and informational programming for children. "We are all stockholders in the future of our TV," she said, "and bad TV drives down the value of our stock."

Lambchop, the ventriloquist's sidekick, had his own contribution. "Give us good stuff, and we'll give it back, not just to you but to our own children," he piped.

Lewis and Lambchop were both, in their ways, ventriloquizing the outrage of Congress and public interest organizations, and particularly the Center for Media Education (CME), at broadcasters. CME, which has inherited the mantle of Peggy Charren's soon-to-be-disbanded Action for Children's Television, has closely followed the fate of the 1990 Children's TV Act. The act required broadcasters to air educational and informational programming for children. Many of them responded that programs such as *The Jetsons* and *Leave it to Beaver* were informational, teaching children about the world of the future and sibling rivalries.

Broadcasters' abuse of the law angered lawmakers, including Markey, who called run-of-the-mill kids' TV "the video equivalent of a Twinkie." The hearing went

In tandem with the Federal Communications Commission's opening of a proceeding that could strengthen and better define the act and its enforcement.

The signals have been sent; stand by for kids' programming that's not only entertaining but also informational and educational.

Outer space ads

Sony has again become a pioneer, this time as the first advertiser to place an ad on the rockets of a space mission set to launch in May. The rockets will carry the logo of Arnold Schwarzenegger's new film, *Last Action Hero*. Although TV cameras don't usually record commercial, unmanned launches like this one, Sony execs say they will this time—for the news value of the advertising.

And by the way

If you're looking for more information on our commercialized culture, check out the magazine *ad/vice* from the Center for the Study of Commercialism, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009 (202-332-9110 X6). Among its recent newsmagazines: The American Cancer Society has discovered that most magazines would not accept anti-smoking ads, which would clash with a \$264.4 million investment in advertising by the tobacco industry. *Advertising Age* has found that almost all newspaper editors in a recent study said advertisers had tried to influence stories. And it's now illegal for telemarketers to bother you more than once, if you tell them to stop it.

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WINDS OF CHANGE

The Midwest could become the "Saudi Arabia of wind energy"

There's an enormous untapped energy reserve in America's Great Plains states that in theory could supply all of the nation's electricity needs. And it could do so without drilling a single oil well, claims a recent report by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). It's wind—blowing strong and steady across the plains on the blades of windmills, providing a "Saudi Arabia of wind energy."

With improved windmills coming on the market, farmers and ranchers could lease rights to utilities to build large "windmill farms." Without seriously disrupting agriculture around these windmills, the facilities could supplement farmers' incomes. According to the report, the windmill farms could generate electricity at prices lower than or equal to electricity from new coal-fired plants, even before taking into account environmental benefits.

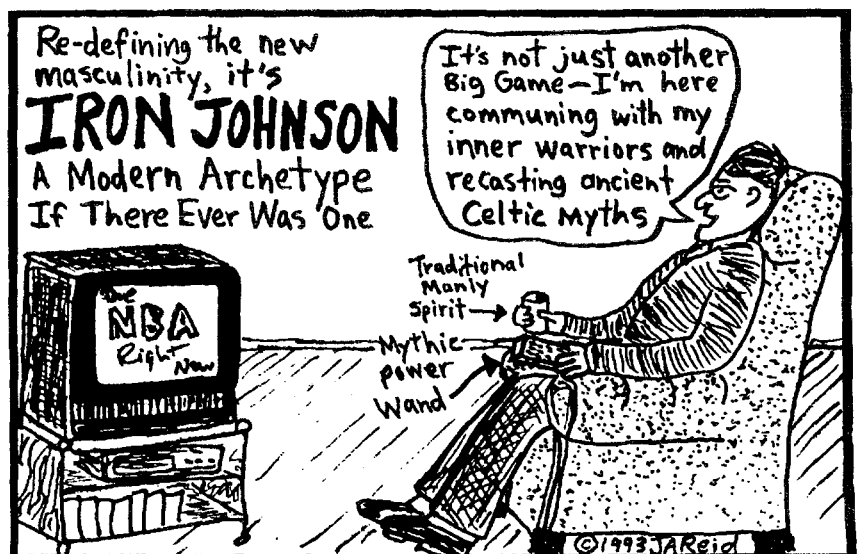
The UCS report, "Powering the Midwest," argues that renewable energy is promising even in an often cold region not regarded as a hot solar prospect. While the group's case for biomass (wood, specialty crops and waste) as a fuel is more problematic—conflicting with other environmental goals such as recycling and waste reduction—the argument for wind power is persuasive.

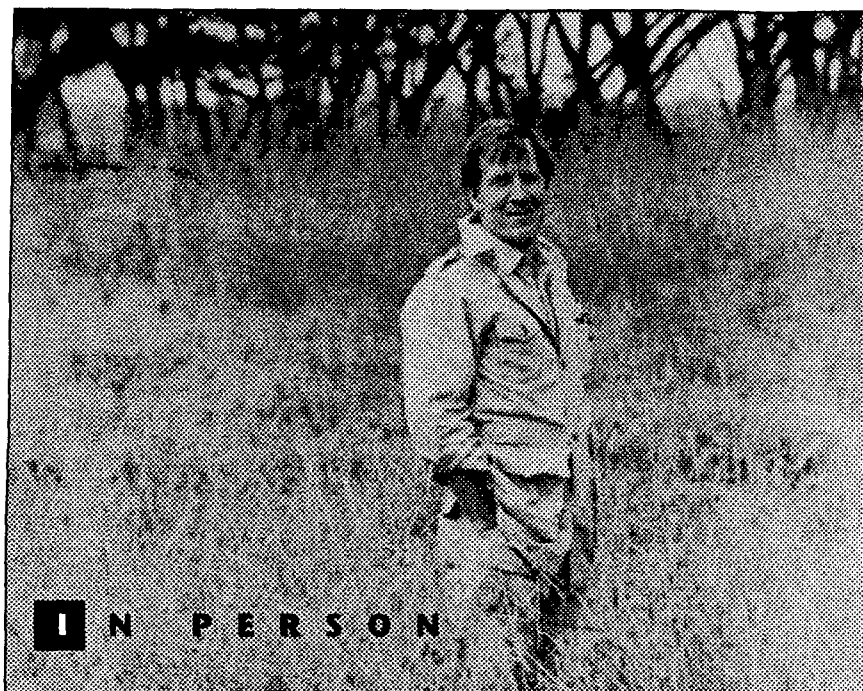
Within 40 years, the UCS report argues, the nation could cut its energy needs by half from what "business as usual" would dictate. Within that time frame, it would also be possible to provide half the nation's energy needs from renewable sources and to cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than 70 percent. Moreover, there's a huge potential international market for the existing Midwest manufacturing base to retool and produce renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. UCS recommends a mix of pollution taxes and reforms of utility regulations to spur development.

—David Moberg

ROUGH CUTS

BY JA REID





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I N P E R S O N

"It was a great massacre," [said 38-year-old Rufina Amaya.] "They left nothing." Somewhere amid the carnage were Amaya's husband, who was blind, her nine-year-old son and three daughters, ages five years, three years and eight months. Amaya said she heard her son scream: 'Mama, they're killing me. They've killed my sister. They're going to kill me.' ... Amaya said she has not been able to return to Mozote since the massacre. 'If I return, I will hear my children crying.'"

—Raymond Bonner, *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1982, page 1

ENOUGH BLAME

Raymond Bonner calls it like he sees it

Eleven years ago, Raymond Bonner shocked the nation with his report on the massacre of hundreds of peasants in the Salvadoran village of Mozote. According to lists prepared by the villagers, members of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion killed 482 villagers, 280 of them children under the age of 14. But the Atlacatl Battalion's collaborators in Washington—Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Elliott Abrams, among others—maintained there was no proof of a massacre.

In response to his story, the death squads put Bonner on their journalist death list.

Back in Washington, the administration loosed its intellectual death squad, Accuracy in Media (AIM). This propaganda arm of the Reagan revolution put Bonner on its list and turned the screws until *New York Times* publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger said ouch. The *Times* called Bonner in from Central America and demoted him.

AIM's Reed Irvine proclaimed victory in the *AIM Report*: "Here is some good news. You can quit writing Mr. Sulzberger at the *New York Times* about Raymond Bonner. Bonner is no longer the correspondent for the *Times* in Central America."

Like postwar France, the United States is now trying to come to terms with its past, to account for crimes committed in its war against the "international

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Bad Journal-ism

A fascinating study in journalistic ethics recently played itself out on the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. On March 17, the *Journal* opined that Wilbert Tatum, who had been named editor-in-chief of the *New York Post*, was unqualified for the job. Why? Tatum is publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, a paper "best known in New York City," the *Journal* wrote, "for its unstinting support of the Tawana Brawley rape hoax and its defense of the rapists of the Central Park jogger."

Just two days later, however, those same editorial pages were on the defensive over charges that the *Journal* had helped pull off a hoax of much more import than the Brawley case. Furthermore, the *Journal* had defended the perpetrators of a crime far bloodier than the one in Central Park. The incident in question was the 1982 massacre in the Salvadoran town of Mozote, where U.S.-trained government troops killed more than 500 peasants. At the time, the Reagan administration denied reports of the slaughter. And the White House had help.

In a Feb. 10, 1982, editorial, the *Journal* attacked *New York Times* journalist Raymond Bonner for reporting that the massacre took place. (See "In Person" on page 10.) The *Journal* wrote that Bonner's tour of the massacre site, led by rebel soldiers, had been merely "a propaganda exercise." The editorial then defended

the Salvadoran government, and implied that Bonner had been guilty of "journalistic romanticizing of revolutionaries."

But with the release of a United Nations report documenting the massacre last month, it became clear that the *Journal* was the one guilty of "journalistic romanticizing" at best, "a propaganda exercise" at worst.

Thus, it was time for some revisionist history in the *Journal's* March 19 editorial. "It was clear enough at the time [in 1982] that something awful had happened [at Mozote]," the *Journal* claimed with fuzzy hindsight. Why, then, did the *Journal's* own 1982 editorial about Mozote make a special point of condemning Bonner for using those same words—"It is clear"—in arguing the massacre had, in fact, happened? And why had the 1982 article insisted on putting the word "massacre" in quotation marks?

Pro-life?

Despite the anti-abortion movement's non-violent rhetoric, last month's murder of Dr. David Gunn was far from being the first attack on abortion-providers.

The National Abortion Federation reports that since 1977, abortion-providers have been hit by 36 bombings, 76 attacks by arsonists, 53 cases of attempted bombing or arson, 277 bomb threats, 119 death threats, 84 assaults, 55 stalking cases, 28 burglaries, 452 cases of vandalism and 2 kidnappings.

communist conspiracy." There are now moves in Congress to set up a truth commission to determine not whether, but how often, certain former administration officials—like Elliott Abrams—lied to Congress.

Bonner just moved to Warsaw with his wife, Jane Perlez, the *New York Times* correspondent whose reporting last July put Somalia on the national agenda. Before departing he talked to *In These Times* about the sudden resurrection of the Mozote massacre.

"I am happier that it happened than that it didn't happen," said Bonner. But he scoffed at the idea of the U.S. Congress setting up a truth commission.

Bonner said he recently reread some of the reporting on Central America in the early '80s. "I was struck by how good the reporting was," said Bonner. "A lot of the information was out there. It was the Congress and particularly the Democrats in Congress who continued to fund the war in El Salvador. They all expressed moral outrage and then voted more money for the Nicaraguan contras and El Salvador. What were they doing in 1980 and 1981 and 1982? Why weren't they doing their job then? Maybe there should be a truth commission on the truth commission."

Though Bonner is unsure that an exhumation of U.S. policy in El Salvador has merit, he has no such qualms about a congressional inquiry into the Reagan and Bush administration's covert support for Saddam Hussein at a time when Iraq was committing systematic genocide against the Kurds.

"The humanitarian, moral side of me says that we have to stop this kind of conduct," said Bonner, who believes that the actions of some U.S. officials need to be investigated.

"I was really scarred by the situation in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua. I was accused of being a Marxist. Instead of looking at what I wrote, they accused me of being soft on communism." According to Bonner, these attacks on the press had their desired effect, stifling coverage of the U.S. war against Nicaragua. "No reporter wanted to be accused of being soft on communism," he said.

Bonner resists any attempt to peg him ideologically. During the Vietnam War he served in the Marines. Then it was on to law school, work as a public interest lawyer and a stint with the San Francisco district attorney. In 1979, he quit his job and headed on down to Bolivia, where he began reporting. "I just had the wanderlust," he said. "I didn't know if I was going to be gone for three years or three months."

Fourteen years later, he is still on the road. Before last month's move to Warsaw, he had traveled in Africa, researching his forthcoming book about the politics of wildlife conservation, *At the Hand of Man—Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife*.

Once again, Bonner is likely to be vilified for reporting a story about suffering peasants that no one wants to hear. *At the Hand of Man*, an examination of eco-colonialism, argues that the West should allow Africa to exploit its wildlife.

"What are we doing to help the people of Africa?" Bonner asks. "One way to help them is to let them make money on the wildlife. It's a horrible thought, commercializing everything, but the poverty of Africa is pretty horrible as well. The concept sticks in my craw, but goddamn it, unless we pay attention to the African people, we aren't going to save the wildlife."

"The knee-jerk liberal response is to be on the side of every animal. I talked to a mother whose daughter was eaten by a lion. How many grizzly bears do you want in Illinois?"

—Joel Bleifuss

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

DLC—DEMOCRATS LOOKING FOR CASH

By Joel Bleifuss

Back in the old days, Democrats frequently doubted whether corporate America had noble intentions. Some even ventured that big business, motivated by short-term profits, did not have the country's best interests at heart. Then along came the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC).

Let's start at the beginning. In July 1980, Democratic presidential hopeful Ted Kennedy spoke to a Service Employees Union gathering and criticized President Jimmy Carter's fidelity to the oil lobby: "No Democratic president should ever hesitate to call for the closing of tax loopholes that pour \$5 billion a year into the swollen treasuries of the oil companies. I prefer the closing of tax loopholes to the slashing of social programs."

Members of the 1980 Democratic platform committee weren't moved by Kennedy's appeals, however, and they rejected proposals that called for: a \$12 billion jobs program to combat the recession; a timetable for the establishment of national health insurance; the elimination of tax loopholes for investors in oil companies; and reinstatement of price controls on oil and gas. As you recall, in 1980 the price of oil was double that of 1979 and inflation was rampant.

Kennedy warned his fellow Democrats of the dangers of a party platform that was "Democratic only in name." He advised, "There are those who say that in 1980 the Democratic Party can win regardless of its policies by scaring Americans about the Republican candidate. There surely is a right-wing threat. But we will not defeat it by tilting toward it. Too many Democrats may choose the genuine article."

Some in the Democratic Party, albeit a minority, have argued that the Democrats lost in 1980 because Carter was too conservative. As Jeff Faux wrote in 1984 in the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*, "The principles of Reaganomics were first applied to the U.S. economy, not after Inauguration Day 1981, but two and a half years before by a conservative Democratic president. The presidential election of 1980 was, in part at least, a vote against the conservative strategy of solving the problem of inflation by creating widespread unemployment. Ironically, President Reagan's success in getting the economy growing again is largely due to the stimulation caused by his budget-busting deficits—an old liberal Democratic formula. ... The real lesson [of 1980] is that Democrats cannot govern effectively as a conservative party. Historically, they are the party of progress and social responsibility. Their great leaders have been people who did not shy away from those themes but made them work politically."

We all know what transpired during the next 12 years. Most leaders in the Democratic establishment concluded that the party's demise was the fault of liberals. As an antidote, these Democrats argued for a move toward the center.

And to finance that move, the Democratic Party turned to big business. In April 1984 the Democratic National Committee gleefully announced that 230 business executives had each agreed to contribute \$10,000 of their own money, or \$15,000 of their company's money, to join the Democratic Business Council, a group established after the 1980 defeat. In that 1984 election, contributions from corporate interests to the Democrats exceeded donations from the labor movement for the first time.

After Walter Mondale's defeat, the Democrats continued their search for a winning combination. Arizona's Bruce Babbitt told a gathering of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority that Democrats must re-examine the idea "that big business can only be checked by the countervailing power of big labor and big government." As Virginia's Charles Robb explained to this gathering of conservative Democrats, the party had to "also be a party of business leaders, doctors, pharmacists, stockbrokers and other professions for whom our appeal has been missing in recent years."

In spring 1985, centrist Democrats began courting the business community in earnest and soon founded the Democratic Leadership Council. At the December 1986 DLC convention, Robb decried "the ideological litmus test and programmatic rigidity of what some have called liberal fundamentalism." As Rep. Steve Neal (D-NC) explained at the time, "This group represents the mainstream of American

thinking—sensible, pragmatic and moderate.”

In 1990, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton was elected to chair the DLC. In 1991, the DLC held its annual convention in Cleveland. The convention was underwritten by such corporations as AT&T, RJR Nabisco and Phillip Morris, which had contributed from \$3,000 to \$25,000. Getting down to business, the 800 convention delegates, representing all 50 states, passed a proposal endorsing a congressional resolution to give President Bush “fast track” authority to negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. Many of these 800 “kinder and gentler” Democrats were corporate lobbyists who had paid \$35 to join the DLC and \$50 to attend the convention. DLC President Al From explained to the *New York Times*’ Gwen Ifill that the lobbyists had joined the DLC to “mingle with public officials.”

In his address to the mingling suits, Chairman Clinton said: “If we want to be a national party, we have a lot more to do. We’ve got to have a message that touches everybody, that makes sense to everybody, that goes beyond the stale orthodoxies of left and right.”

Clinton was on target about the need for a message that “touches everybody.” He proved that in last year’s election. And there are early indications that he may prove to be a great leader. Yet this question remains unanswered: Who are the “we” that Clinton was referring to? Is it us?

“The Democratic Party ain’t what it used to be,” says Larry Makinson of the Center for Responsive Politics and the author of *Open Secrets—The Encyclopedia of Congressional Money and Politics*. He points out that Democrats are increasingly reliant on corporate money.

And, according to my calculations, no group within Congress is beholden to more corporate sponsors than the Democratic Leadership Council. Today, the DLC rules. Former Chairman Clinton is now president. DLC founding member Al Gore is vice president. DLC members are secretaries of the Treasury, Defense, Agriculture, Education, Interior and Housing and Urban Development.

The gross receipts of the 1990 election cycle, as tabulated in *Open Secrets*, indicate a correlation between DLC membership and receiving corporate PAC money. In fact, seven of the top 10 PAC recipients in the House are DLC members.

In his study, Makinson lists the top 10 recipients of both PAC and individual donations from each of the 10 leading corporate lobbies. In the House,

DLC members show up on these lists 37 times. Republicans appear 34 times. Non-DLC Democrats appear only 29 times.

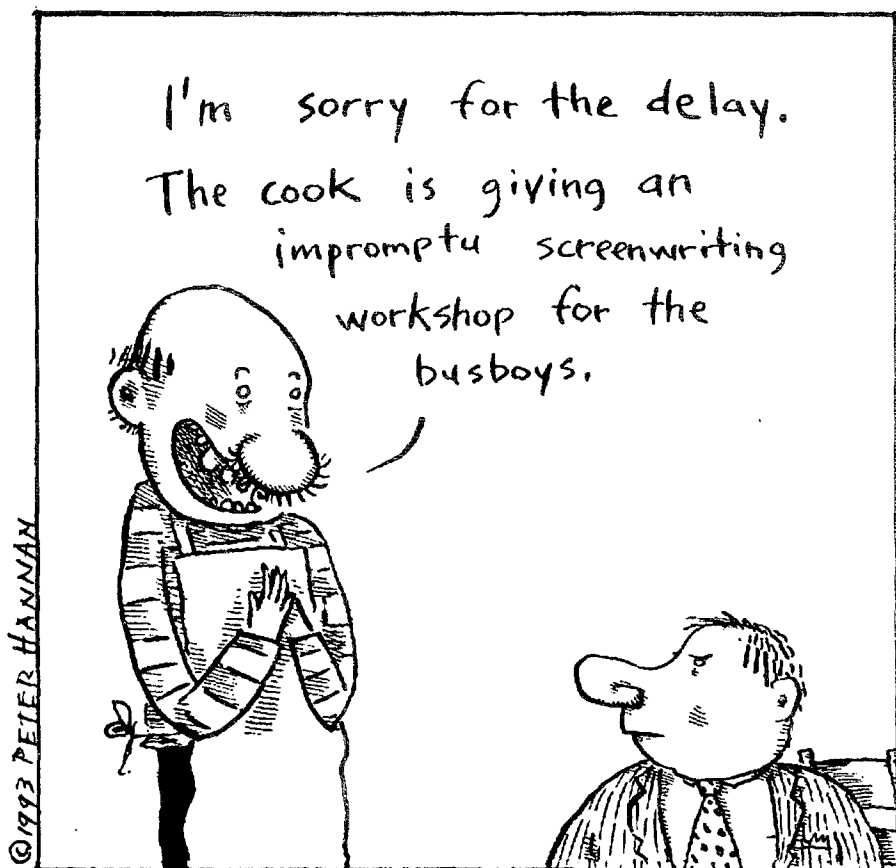
DLC members who sit on the two most lucrative House committees—the two committees most important to big business—get more corporate money than their non-DLC counterparts. On the Energy and Commerce Committee, eight DLC members are among the top 12 Democratic recipients of money from committee-related PACs. On the Ways and Means Committee, eight DLC members are among the top 13 Democratic recipients of committee-related contributions. All told, during the 1990 election cycle the 16 DLC members on these two committees pulled in more than \$6 million from committee-related corporate interests.

When examining these numbers, keep in mind that only 100 Democratic House members belong to the DLC. And 168 of the House Democrats—67 percent—are not in the DLC.

DLC influence, however, reaches high in the House. Majority Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri—the \$3.2 million man who is helping stall campaign finance reform—was listed as one of the top 10 recipients in seven of the 10 corporate interest-group categories. When the 1992 election figures finally come out, will Gephardt ring up 10 for 10? ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



THE CITIES

Ganging together

A

n unexpected spirit of détente is alive and kicking in America's black inner cities as street gangs in urban communities across the country seem suddenly smitten with the idea of peace.

Gang truces are easing violent rivalries in many urban areas. So why aren't police cheering?

By Salim Muwakkil

In Los Angeles, a deadly 20-year feud between the Crips and Bloods has been officially terminated. In Chicago, a similarly bloody rivalry between gangs connected to the Black Disciples and those aligned with the Gangster Disciples also has been called to a halt.

And because these L.A. and Chicago "street organizations" have growing networks of affiliates in other cities, gang violence in Cleveland, Seattle, Kansas City, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Tulsa, Omaha and Minneapolis has also been eased by the truces. In fact, Kansas City is hosting the

first National Truce Movement Summit on Peace and Economic Development from April 29-May 2, the first anniversary of the Los Angeles disorders. Summit organizers expect representatives from hundreds of gangs to attend the conference.

Levels of urban violence have skyrocketed in recent years, and police officials attribute much of that increase to the growth of street gangs. Los Angeles alone registered 771 gang-related homicides in 1991 and in Chicago, gang violence is said to have played a large part in the city's soaring murder rate. Officials in the smaller cities have also expressed dismay at the lengthening roster of out-of-town gang members who are setting up shop.

Police in Minneapolis suspect gang involvement in the September 1992 murder of a white officer, and many blame the town's liberal leadership for tolerating the spread of Chicago-based gangs. Seattle and Shreveport also are plagued by migrating L.A. gangs, who began affecting the crime

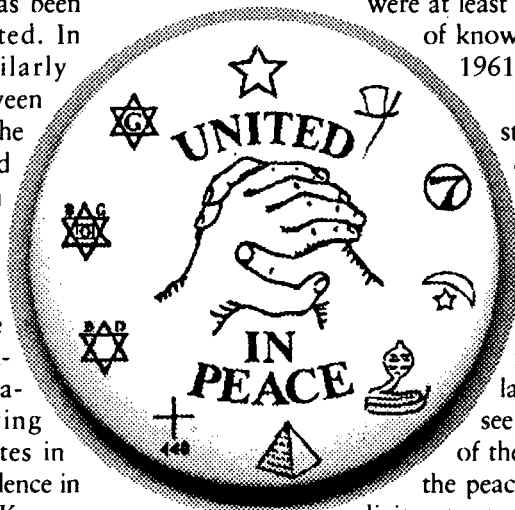
statistics soon after their arrival. Police in Tulsa have traced their crack-cocaine problem back to a Chicago gang. The list goes on and, according to gang expert Malcolm Klein, it is getting longer.

"There's no doubt about it," he says. "Gang membership is increasing, and they are spreading to places other than the large cities." Klein, a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California, has been studying the dynamics of street gangs for nearly 30 years and is considered one of the country's leading experts on the subject. "In 1992 there were at least 187 cities with evidence of known street gangs, while in 1961 that number was 23."

Since the growth of street gangs is positively correlated to increases in violent crime, it seems logical to support the recent truces—or anything else designed to increase the peace. But law-enforcement officials see things differently. Most of them seem convinced that the peace effort is a canny publicity stunt staged by the gangs to

burnish their image. "We're impeding the flow of narcotics and these gangbangers just want us out of Dodge City," explained Chicago police Comdr. Robert Guthrie in a concise summary of what is probably a police consensus.

Many law-enforcement officials believe gangs are simply



becoming so organized that violence impedes their ability to execute more sophisticated crimes, such as drug trafficking. "What is this so-called truce all about?" asks Lt. Michael Savidan, head of the gang detail at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. "It could be a positive spin by some gang members to get together and really stop the violence and become active in rebuilding communities. Or it could become, and this is my guess, a negative in that they are uniting to make more illegal profits or move against police."

Indeed, some police worry that they will now be the target of gang violence. The anxiety of police forces around the country was recently reflected in their panicked reaction to pop star Ice-T's rock rant "Cop Killer." Police persecution of African-Americans has always been a reality, and any change in that status quo is a threat to the white leadership of those forces.

Young people in the truce areas are generally receptive to the peace idea, and some analysts trace their attitudes to messages coming from rap artists. Many of the popular "gangsta" rappers are now sprinkling their obscenity-laced commentary with ideals of self-reliance and industry. Others are crafting lyrics so contemptuous of police they make Ice-T's jam sound like a loud fairy tale. If gangs lose their fear of the police, that removes one of the cops' most powerful weapons.

Organizers of the truce give a simple reason for the action. "This started because we got tired of seeing so many innocent black children getting killed for so much dumb shit," explains Kevin "T-Roc" of the Nickerson Gardens (Watts) Bloods. L.A.'s gangs are loosely confederated alliances of neighborhood-based groups. "We started out in Watts before the riots, just trying to get three major projects together: Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs and Imperial Courts," he says. The group fashioned a treaty based on a copy of the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. "After the riots the truce just caught on everywhere



© Ted Soqui

across L.A., and it's still holding." The groups have come together under the logo of "Black Men United."

"I don't care why they decided to stop killing each other, I just like their decision," notes Danny

Bakewell, director of a Los Angeles-based group called the Brotherhood Crusade. "Once our black youth stop looking at each other as enemies but as brothers with the same problems, anything can happen."

Bakewell, a longtime advocate of black empowerment through entrepreneurial pursuits, says the truce offers a golden opportunity to influence the thinking of young black people who—imprisoned within their insular gang culture—normally would be inaccessible. "It's obvious to me that a lot of young brothers are really listening to various messages of empowerment. And when they listen, they easily grasp the logic of doing for self."

Chicago's gangs are organized in much tighter units than are those in Los Angeles, but they were propelled toward peace by similar dynamics. Leaders of the city's 12 major African-American gangs—members prefer the label "nation"—had decided in 1991 to curtail the escalating levels of violence that had transformed many of the city's neighborhoods into blood-stained battlegrounds. By this

Members of the Crips and the Bloods celebrate L.A.'s gang truce last year.

past October, the groups' leaders had forged a peace treaty, and the October 13 sniper shooting of a seven-year-old student, Dantrell Davis, added powerful momentum to the effort. The truce—members prefer the name “treaty”—was officially announced two weeks after Davis' shocking death.

Wallace “Gator” Bradley is a major architect of the “United in Peace” effort among Chicago's estimated 50,000 gang members. A former enforcer of the Gangster Disciples (GD)—one of Chicago's largest nations—the 40-ish Bradley remains a well-respected figure in Chicago's gang subculture. “The killings and things had gotten so bad, about two years ago, that I got a call from some brothers in the penitentiary to come and talk about taking some drastic action,” he explains. Although Bradley's gangbanging days are far behind him—he has even run for political office—he retains the trust of many imprisoned gang leaders, including GD legend Larry Hoover. According to prison officials, Hoover is among the most powerful gang leaders in the city's history.

“The brothers in the penitentiary as well as many of the younger brothers on the street have all come to realize that we as a people have become part of a genocidal plan to annihilate black males,” Bradley says, explaining the larger reasoning behind the peace. “We understood that we could no longer be a part of that plan. We had to be ‘united in peace.’” With the assistance and support of the gangs' jailed elders, Bradley and other grass-roots leaders worked tirelessly to construct a workable peace treaty.

But this “genocidal plan” was not the only motivation for the truce. Though Bradley is hesitant to discuss it, drug trade did play a role. During the '80s, the infamous El-Rukns street gang, in association with several other major groups, conspired to prevent crack cocaine from gaining a foothold in the Chicago market. They did this to maintain their control over street-level drug sales in the city. Even police officials openly admit that Chicago remained untouched by the crack invasion of the mid-'80s that took such a heavy toll in other major cities.

But this crack embargo fell apart after federal and local officials launched a huge campaign against the El Rukns, resulting in the arrests of top leaders. Free-lance drug dealers took advantage of the void left in the Rukns' wake and aggressively began asserting their territorial claims. According to Bradley, those were the factors contributing to the rash of drive-by shootings and other random acts of violence.

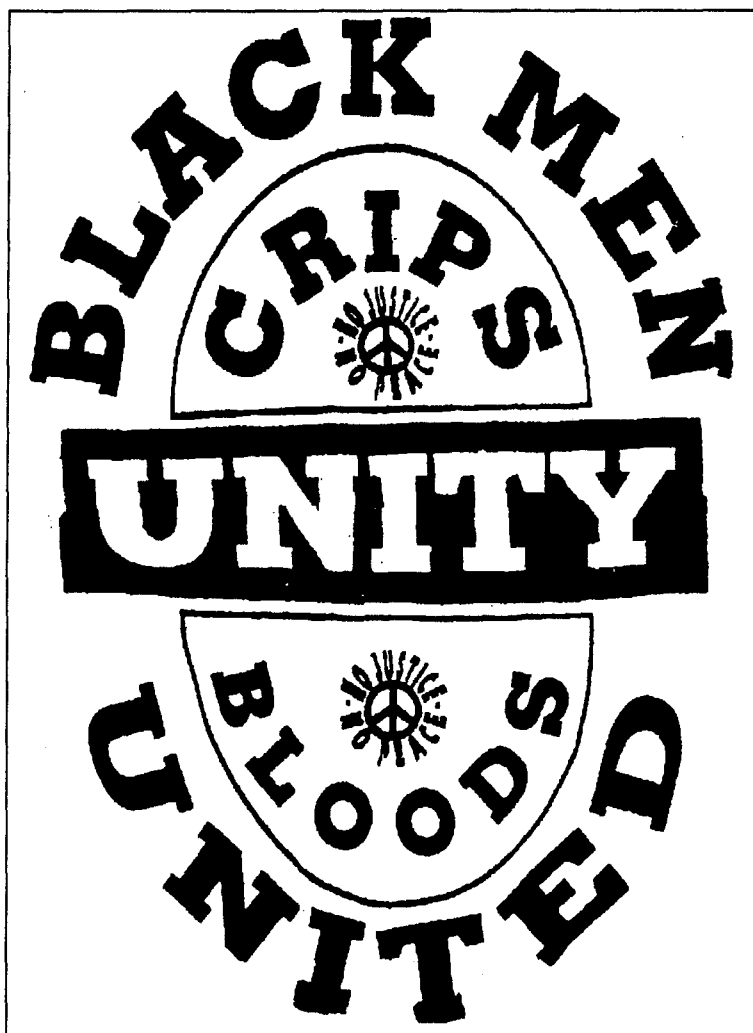
“[Established Chicago gangs] didn't have to fight over any turf. So it had to be some other folks doing all this shooting,” he says. “If the major nations call a peace, then we would be able to isolate the outsiders. Because anyone who violates the peace has no place to hide and no protection. And the vibe of peace is in the air. That's why brothers all over the country are talking peace and unity.”

In many ways, this explanation adds credence to

the police argument that the profit motive is the major incentive for the so-called peace treaty. But just as a desire for a non-violent business climate helped end the drive-by shootings and random violence of the '20s, a time when bathtub gin, not crack cocaine, was the underground economy's biggest seller, such a desire may have a similar effect on today's violence-plagued communities.

But Klein and other experts dispute law enforcement's reductionist insistence that a causal connection exists between street gangs and drug distribution. The underground drug economy may have exacerbated the problem of gang violence, Klein concedes, but “to suggest that the street gang problem is the same as the drug distribution problem is incorrect.” The proliferation of gangs is a much more complex phenomenon—involving structural changes in the economy, changes in the nature of the family, cultural attitudes toward youth and particularly the growth of the urban underclass.

William Strickland, a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, finds many reasons for black men's contemporary attraction to gangs. “Without a black struggle to orient [this generation of young black men], as it had oriented every generation of black people



since 1619, orphaned by this season's elitist 'talented tenth,' malignantly neglected by the government of the United States and excluded from the labor force by American business, young black men have been left to forge their own identities in gangs, out of American television and MTV, and in contention with the dog-eat-dog, get-over-at-any-cost macho street culture."

While many may dispute the reasons why gangs have become a growth industry, there is little disagreement on the reality. And though smaller cities are also beginning to suffer gang problems, the larger cities remain the most lethal battlegrounds, and most of them have experienced record rates of violence in recent years. Last May, the L.A. County District Attorney's office released a wide-ranging and controversial report entitled "Gangs, Crime and Violence in Los Angeles." The report asserted that L.A.'s gang population numbered approximately 150,000, with membership in 1,000 gangs.

Although the report found that Latino gangs were more numerous—with 90,000 members, compared to 50,000 in black gangs—it concluded that 47 percent of all young black men between the ages of 21 and 24 made appearances in the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Gang Reporting Evaluation and Tracking database.

The study sparked an uproar among black organizers and civil libertarians who charged the numbers were grossly inflated. Young black men were often identified as gang members simply by their clothing style and the neighborhood in which they lived, critics complained. And it's not unreasonable to note that law-enforcement agencies have a vested interest in promoting anti-gang hysteria.

But despite the hype, street gangs are a proliferating phenomenon. And if dealing drugs—particularly crack—is their primary occupation, ruthlessness is a business plus. Bradley, who himself has served four years in prison for armed robbery, says young gang members are much more vicious than they were in his day. Police have made similar observations.

The L.A. Police Department claims it has identified at least 70 cities nationwide where members of L.A.-based Crips and Bloods have settled. Although there's some dispute on the numbers, there's little disagreement among experts that L.A.'s gangs wield enormous influence across much of the country. Chicago's tight constellation of organized nations are similarly influential in places like Minneapolis, Des Moines, Tulsa, Milwaukee and Kansas City.

For reasons many find hard to explain, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Newark and other large Eastern cities have smaller gang populations proportionately than do cities in the Midwest and the West Coast. Although, Klein says, "New York police tend to drastically undercount their gang-related problems." But even if they're managing to escape the problem now, gangs eventually will spread east if their growth is not halted in the heartland.

In attempts to counter gangs' spreading influence, the Justice Department last year announced that—in a per-

verse peace dividend—300 FBI agents whose foreign counterintelligence jobs were rendered irrelevant by the demise of the Soviet empire would soon be dispatched to help police agencies in their assault on the "gangs and violence" in American cities.

In Los Angeles, organizers modeled their gang truce after the Camp David accords.

In announcing the reassignment of the agents, FBI Director William Sessions called the deployment "the largest reallocation of resources in agency history."

Kenneth Piernick was named supervisor of the FBI's gang task force in Chicago. The new unit, formed a year ago, includes the Chicago

Sheriff's police. Pernick says the task force brings more sophisticated surveillance techniques and increased law-enforcement technology to the fight against gangs, focusing primarily on gang leadership.

For many black Americans still reeling from J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO (counterintelligence) program that targeted black leaders and progressive organizations for disruption and termination during the '60s and '70s, the prospect of an increased FBI presence in the community is not a pleasant one. For others, those living in urban war zones who are prisoners in their fortified homes, the FBI can't arrive soon enough.

With law-enforcement officials expecting new windfalls to help combat the menacing gang problem, the prospect of an authentic gang truce taking hold must rank as a major nightmare. And the police have performed accordingly. Wherever a truce has taken effect, it has faced active opposition from the area's police force. In Minneapolis, a truce initiated by a gang affiliated with Chicago's Vice Lords has been aggressively undermined by the city's police department. In Chicago, those wearing a truce button—emblazoned with the words "United in Peace" and framed by the symbols of the participating organizations—have become a special target for police harassment. Similar stories of police harassment are told in other cities.

It's difficult to blame the police for their skepticism, given the bloody histories of these suddenly civic-minded gangs. And there is little doubt that some of the gangs are using this truce talk as a cover for less wholesome pursuits. No matter how inspiring their words these days, they have a lot of negative history to live down.

While Chicago police concede that there has been a decrease in gang-related shootings since the October truce, they attribute the drop to an increased police presence in high-crime areas and to cold weather. In South Central Los Angeles, gang related homicides dropped dramatically during the truce's initial months. The rate has picked up since

then, but remains below those of recent years.

In an effort to demonstrate their seriousness about the task at hand, Los Angeles' Crips and Bloods have produced a \$3.7 billion proposal to rebuild and develop L.A. and have embarked on some entrepreneurial ventures of their own. Using the theme "Give us the Hammer and the Nails, We Will Rebuild the City" as its motto, the Bloods/Crips document urges \$2 billion be devoted to reconstructing damaged and neglected areas of the city; \$1 billion for a human welfare proposal that would virtually eliminate welfare and bring hospitals and health clinics to South-Central; \$700 million for an education proposal that would refurbish dilapidated schools and aggressively teach marketable skills to inner-city youth; and \$20 million in low-interest business loans.

In Chicago, the truce leaders say their intent is to first stop the killing and then come together to design plans for community rehabilitation and employment. Bradley hands out copies of *Boss*, Mike Royko's critical biography of the late Richard J. Daley, to educate truce leaders on how to parlay group cohesion into political power.

It's too easy to dismiss these efforts. The Crips/Bloods economic plan, for example, has received little play in the mainstream media since it was published last year. Who, after all, do these obstreperous gangbangers think they are, producing proposals like they were some official group? This is a rhetorical question born of conventional wisdom; and it's wrong.

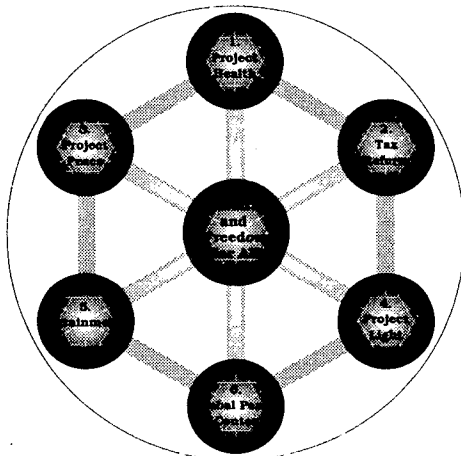
The truce movement has important potential that requires nurturing and unsentimental understanding. Cul-

turally fatherless and lacking institutions like Boy Scouts and Boys Clubs, or any organized rites of passage, inner-city black youth have designed their own rites for their own context. The movement will anoint itself at the Kansas City summit, and that event's success or failure will offer a better hint about its future. "The long-range goal will be to transform the truce into lasting peace so we can address issues of poverty and economic development by tapping into the natural leadership of those human resources we call gang leaders," says Carl Upchurch of the Ohio-based Council for Urban Peace and Justice, one of the summit sponsors.

Although many gang leaders deride mainline civil-rights organizations as "sell outs" and "house niggahs," the contempt is not completely mutual. Under the leadership of the Rev. Ben Chavis, the United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice is footing part of the bill for the Kansas City gathering. "This peace initiative could turn out to be a historic turning point for African-Americans," Chavis says. "And then again, it may not. But we'll never know if we don't exert the effort."

Organizers of the peace effort face skepticism on all fronts. Traditional black nationalists are suspicious of gang members' lack of ideology, the civil-rights fraternity is put off by their proletarian sensibilities, law-enforcement agencies see nothing but scam and community organizers question their commitment. I share some of that skepticism. Nonetheless, these vibrant but confused African-American youth are our future. And we all have a stake in how that turns out. ◀

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T H E L A W

The ghetto made me do it

W

Should the same legal defense that's used for violence-crazed Vietnam vets be applied to violence-crazed inner-city residents?

By Francis Flaherty

hen Felicia "Lisa" Morgan was growing up, her parents would sit down to meals with guns next to their plates. They were defending themselves—against each other.

"This was Lisa's dinner," explains attorney Robin Shellow. "She was seven at the time."

If nothing else, Lisa Morgan's childhood in a poor, inner-city Milwaukee neighborhood starkly illustrates the tragic effects of urban violence. "Mom shot Dad," Shellow says. "And Mom shot boyfriend. ... [Lisa's] uncle, who was actually her age, was murdered. Two days later, her other uncle was murdered. Her sister's boyfriend was paralyzed from the neck down by gunfire. Her brother was shot at and injured. Her mother once had set her father on fire."

If this weren't enough tragedy in one young life, Lisa Morgan's mother was a drug addict and Lisa was raped at age 12.

So perhaps it's not too surprising that Morgan, as a teenager, committed six armed robberies and one intentional homicide in the space of 17 minutes in October 1991. The victims were girls; the stolen objects were jewelry, shoes and a coat. The dead girl was shot at point-blank range.

What is surprising—to the legal establishment, at least—is the approach Robin Shellow used in defending Morgan. In the girl's neighborhood and in her family, Shellow argued, violence is a *norm*, an occurrence so routine that Morgan's 17 years of exposure to it have rendered her not responsible for her actions.

This "ghetto defense" proved fruitless in Morgan's case. In court last year, the young woman was found both sane and guilty. Unless Shellow wins on appeal, Morgan will be behind bars well into the next century.

But despite its failure for Morgan, Shellow's "cultural psychosis" or "psychosocial history" strategy has taken hold. "I've gotten hundreds of calls from interested attorneys," Shellow says. Already, the defense is being

floated in courtrooms around the nation. It's eliciting both enthusiasm and outrage.

Technically, Shellow's defense is a medical one. She believes that Morgan suffers from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological ailments stemming from her lifelong exposure to violence.

Like other good lawyers, Shellow knows that the law abhors broadly applicable excuses, so she emphasizes the narrowness of her claim. Morgan belongs to a very small group of inner-city residents with "tremendous intra-familial violence," only some of whom might experience PTSD. She also stresses the un-revolutionary nature of the defense, medically and legally. PTSD has been recognized as a malady in standard diagnostic texts since 1980, she says, and it has been employed as a criminal defense for Vietnam veterans, battered wives and many other trauma victims.

Despite Shellow's attempts to show that her defense is neither new nor broad, the case is ringing loud alarms. For, however viewed, her strategy sets up an inflammatory equation between inner-city conditions and criminal exculpation. The implication is that if you grew up in a poor, violent neighborhood and you commit a crime, you may go scot-free.

Yet why not a ghetto defense? After all, if a Vietnam veteran can claim PTSD from the shock of war, why shouldn't a similar defense be available for a young black reared in the embattled precincts of Bed-Stuy? Sounds sensible, no? Isn't a ghetto like a battlefield?

Alex Kotlowitz, who chronicled the lives of two Chicago

black boys in *There Are No Children Here*, goes even further. He says the inner city can be worse than war. "You hear constant comparisons of these neighborhoods to war zones, but I think there are some pretty significant differences," he says. "In war, there's at least a sense that someday there will be a resolution, some vision that things could be different. That is not the case in the inner cities. There is no vision. And there's no sense of who's friend and who's foe."

There are other analogies that make the ghetto defense seem very legitimate. For instance, despite traditional self-defense principles, a battered wife in some jurisdictions can kill her sleeping husband and be legally excused for the homicide. The reason is the psychological harm she has sustained from her life of fear and violence.

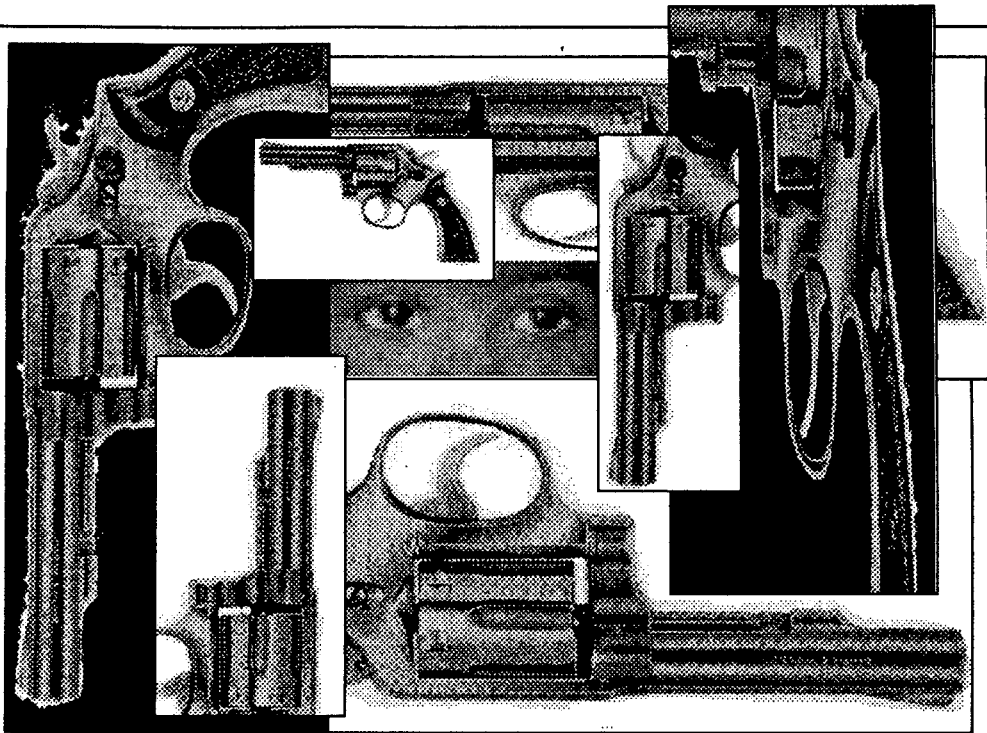
Why not Lisa Morgan? Hasn't her life been debilitatingly violent and fearful?

These arguments make some lawyers hopeful about the future of Shellow's pioneering strategy. But most observers are pessimistic. "We'll get nowhere with it," says famous defense lawyer William Kunstler.

Why? One reason is that the American justice system often favors the powerful over the poor. For generations, for instance, the bloodiest crime in the nation—drunk driving—was punished with a relative wrist slap. By contrast, a recent federal law mandates that those convicted of the new crime of carjacking get socked with a minimum and mandatory 15-year sentence.

What explains these disparate approaches? Simple: protection of the affluent classes. Light penalties for drunk driving protect the affluent because they often drive drunk. Harsh carjacking penalties protect the affluent because they are the usual carjacking victims. "The middle class sees carjacking [laws] as protecting them from people coming out of some poor neighborhood and just showing up in *their* neighborhood and committing a crime in which they are at risk of dying," says Professor James Liebman of Columbia University School of Law.

Because the ghetto defense protects the poor instead of the powerful, Kunstler and others doubt it has a bright future. Other factors further dim the strategy's chances. Fear is a main one, says Professor Liebman. The ghetto defense brings a gulp from jurors because "their first thought is, 'If he's not responsible, then none of those people are,'" he reasons. And we all know what that means: riots, mayhem, Los Angeles.



Social guilt raises even higher the hurdles for the ghetto defense. To allow such a defense is a tacit admission that we—society—tolerate a situation so hobbling that its victims have become unaccountable for their actions. "If it ain't them who's guilty, it's us," says Michael Dowd, director of the Pace University Battered Women's Justice Center in New York. And "it's just too horrific for us to accept responsibility, too horrific to say, 'I'm responsible for what happened in L.A.' We will be able to accept the [ghetto] defense at the same moment that we are seriously moved to eradicate the realities behind that defense."

What are the biggest criticisms of the ghetto defense? One focuses on the victim's identity. Battered spouses and battered children are accused of killing precisely those who hurt them. This endows the crime with a certain rough justice. But in a ghetto defense case, the victim is usually an innocent stranger.

Others, like Kotlowitz, worry that the ghetto defense might dislodge the cornerstone of our justice system: personal responsibility. "We have to be careful not to view people growing up in [inner-city] neighborhoods completely as victims; they are both victims and actors," he warns. "We can't absolve them from responsibility."

Lisa Morgan "went up to someone she didn't know, stole a jacket from her, and then just blew her away," he says. "There's no way as a society that we can excuse that. We can understand it, but we can't excuse it."

He raises a fundamental question. Everyone can point to scars from the past—alcoholic parents, tragic love, etc.—and claim exculpation. And if all are excused, who is responsible?

Another worry is diminished standards. "[The ghetto defense] lowers expectations," Kotlowitz continues. "It says, 'OK, I understand what you've been through, so it's OK to

go out and hurt somebody.' And once you lower your expectations, particularly with kids, they will meet only those lower expectations."

It's only fair to note that other criminal defenses also have these weaknesses. For instance, the victim of a PTSD-afflicted veteran is often an innocent passerby, and the battered-spouse doctrine certainly raises questions about personal responsibility and lowered expectations.

And if, as seems likely, some ghetto residents do have PTSD largely as a result of their living conditions, it's hard to see why this ailment should be exculpatory for veterans, say, but not for ghetto residents. After all, a disease is a disease, and how you got it is irrelevant.

How deep go the wounds from the ghetto? Here are two incidents in Morgan's life: "When Felicia was about 11, her mother put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her," according to a psychologist's report in the case. "Felicia escaped by running into the basement, where she 'busted the lights out with my hand' so that her mother could not see her." Then, when she was 12, the landlord attacked her. "Felicia fought him off by throwing hot grease onto him, but he finally subdued her, tied her hands to the bed, stuffed her mouth with a sock and raped her."

How does one live like this? Morgan gives a hint. "My ears be open," she told the psychologist, "even when I'm asleep."

This was a *child*. Society did nothing to stop these daily depredations upon her. While the legal propriety of the ghetto defense is an important question, the biggest question of all in this story has nothing to do with personal responsibility. It has to do with society's responsibility to poor children like Morgan. What does it say about our society that such a defense was conceived? How can things have come to this pass? ◀

Francis Flaherty is a freelance journalist who is on the editorial board of the *Progressive*.

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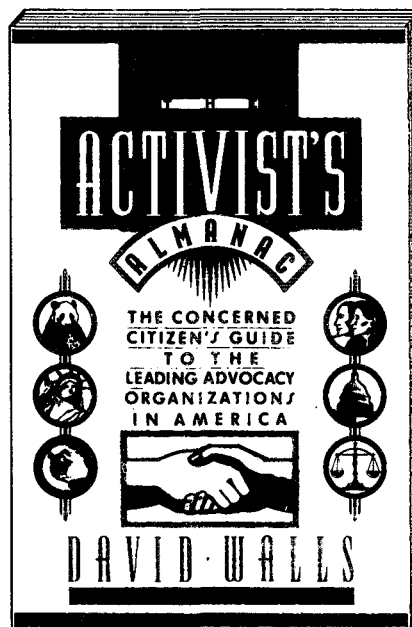
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PUBLIC POLICY

Meet the “employables”

A new breed of welfare recipient has been spotted in Connecticut: the “employables.” These single adults receive a form of welfare known as General Assistance (GA), but Connecticut’s governor wants to eliminate the state’s 22,000 employables from the GA rolls by forcing them to find a job and become self-sufficient. Clearly, some employables are addicted to drugs or alcohol, while others have grade-school educations, or no marketable skills.

*A new wave
of welfare
slashing uses
a neologism
for cover.*

By Paul Bass
NEW HAVEN, CT

Then there are those, like Andre Bennett, who have a skill—in Bennett’s case, carpentry. After working various construction jobs in Connecticut during the boom years, he considered himself an employable when he hit a dry employment spell in 1985. But he quickly found himself up

against tens of thousands of highly trained workers who had lost their jobs in military industries—overeducated engineers willing to work for half their old salaries.

“Employable implies the ability to get a job,” Bennett says. “You don’t have the capacity to get a job if there are no jobs. The people who are getting laid off from Pratt & Whitney are getting the jobs we want because they’re overqualified. Even office work, filing, painting ... not anything as technical as designing airplane parts.”

Connecticut first labeled Bennett an employable in 1992, when it cut GA benefits by 25 percent. At the time, the state announced it was coupling those cuts with a new program to refer employables to available jobs.

But a funny thing happened with that job-referral program. The people running it had to turn away most of the first wave of employables referred to them. For whatever reason—their appearance, their lack of skills, their physical or mental health problems—these employables weren’t ready to join the workforce. So the referral program sent them back to the welfare offices. The reason this

time around? There were no jobs to send them to.

The rise of employables can be traced to Pennsylvania, where in the early ’80s the wave of GA cutbacks began. In the late ’80s and early ’90s, cash-strapped states from Ohio to California have turned to the GA rolls as the most politically palatable first target for welfare cuts. Some bureaucrats have preferred the term “job-ready” to employable. In both cases, the terms have served the role that “pacification” served for the military in Vietnam and El Salvador—to cloak painful realities under the cover of doublespeak. The contradiction between the language and the reality gets to the heart of what’s not working in half-way steps toward welfare reform. And it reflects how popular Reagan-era misperceptions of welfare clients as leeches gave rise to punitive rather than effective policy.

In the 27 states that have GA, the program covers individuals who don’t qualify for federal assistance. Connecticut is the latest in a string of states paring GA back. The cuts, in part, are a response to the general belief that many people dependent on welfare could be earning their own keep if government would just cut the umbilical cord.

It hasn’t proved that simple. According to studies of GA cutbacks in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, conducted by the D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, most people removed from the rolls or drastically cut back have failed to find jobs. Those who did often found temporary, part-time, low-paying work. Many people developed serious health problems that went unattended. They soon became even less employable.



Kathleen Cei, New Haven Advocate

Michigan wiped out GA altogether in 1991, leading some to predict that desperate former recipients would riot. A few Connecticut people are making the same prediction, while proponents of the GA cuts in Connecticut rush to point out that the Michigan riots never materialized.

But nor did Michigan's employables prove employable. They suffered more than before, and in some ways merely transferred the public costs of their old GA benefits to hospital emergency rooms and homeless shelters. According to a Michigan League for Human Services study of recipients in the most concentrated GA areas, one-third of former recipients turned up at hospital emergency rooms for health problems.

A broad mail survey found just 17 percent of former recipients working—and half of those had already held a job at the time of the GA cuts. Two out of three of those working had jobs less than full time; half of them worked less than two days a week. In one sample group of 48 former recipients interviewed in person, all but one had had a stable home before the cuts. At the time of the survey, however, six of 48 had been evicted. Of the two-thirds who had regular homes, half had lived there fewer than six months. Twelve of 48 were homeless. Untreated health problems prevented many from holding regular jobs.

GA recipients, even more than welfare mothers, are an

**"Employables" at a new
daytime drop-in center in
New Haven, Conn.**

appealing target for budget cutters because they are the single most difficult group to address in the already difficult debate over welfare reform, argues Yale sociologist Paul Johnston. Consider, he says, the language of that debate.

"The term 'employable' implies the sole problem is with the individual," says Johnston, who has helped the city of New Haven draft welfare reform proposals.

Rather than blame individuals already hard on their luck, Johnston says, policy-makers need to address the lack of good jobs, the unwillingness of many employers to hire urban African-Americans or Latinos and the inability of training programs to help anyone but the "cream" of unemployed people who least need it. Also, says Johnston, government can use its influence with employers, especially those who receive tax breaks or subsidies (known as "welfare" when poor people get it), to hire employables.

The use of the term "employables" serves as a subtle way to justify cuts within the terms of the national welfare reform debate begun in the '80s, argues Julie Strawn, who specializes in welfare and job-training issues for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

"It's a way of presenting a story to the public that these

are people who don't really need assistance," Strawn says.

Connecticut officials don't use the term "welfare reform" when presenting their GA-cut proposal. Instead, they describe it as a necessary budget step that would save an estimated \$87 million (not factoring in new costs for caring for the homeless). While the state legislature is unlikely to pass the entire GA cut being proposed, some form of cut is widely expected.

Connecticut officials, however, do talk about welfare reform, but they mean reforming a different kind of welfare, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Governor Lowell Wiecker wants moms to be able to take jobs without losing all their benefits right away, to live with a husband or lover, to save money in order to eventually graduate from welfare, and to secure child-support money from delinquent dads.

"That puts Connecticut on the cutting edge" of progressive welfare reform, Strawn says. "The proposal reflects what's become a consensus among welfare experts: something has to be done about programs that penalize work, family, savings."

The state's welfare commissioner, Audrey Rowe, who has a background in social-service advocacy, has argued that the state can't afford such reforms for all welfare recipients. A little-noticed (and little-opposed by progressive forces) referendum in last fall's elections put a cap on state spending, thus state officials were forced to choose between cutting benefits to children or those to an older generation. Grilled about the GA cuts on a radio call-in show geared to New Haven's black community, Rowe explained the decision this way: "What you find in this budget is an emphasis on kids. There are too many kids today in poverty who will be the GA-type clients in the future."

The state is, in effect, arguing that single men can move easily to self-sufficiency from welfare, but that members of welfare families need some help to make the transition, according to Helen Ward of the Connecticut Association for Human Services.

"If they're serious about stabilizing life in the cities," Ward says, "you don't help kids by helping the family with progressive reforms but then creating instability in the neighborhoods" by turning thousands of men onto the streets.

"No one is saying this makes

good public policy," acknowledges William Ruffeth, who directly oversees the GA program for the state welfare department. "It's one of those problems that no one had a solution to."

Maybe Connecticut has no solution. But at least the state now has a new word for the problem. ◀

Paul Bass is a reporter for the *New Haven Advocate* and a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

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L A B O R

Striking back without striking

Local union leader

Dave Watts didn't like the handwriting on the wall. It looked like his employer was ready to destroy the union and wipe out his members' jobs. Prospects seemed even worse than they had been at Caterpillar, the largest employer in this industrial city of 94,000 people on the central Illinois prairie, which last year forced strikers back to work by threatening to hire permanent replacement workers.

So Watts decided to get creative. With help from two militant independent advisers, the local has fused two of the most potent new, or rediscovered, weapons that labor has as alternatives to strikes. One is the corporate campaign, which attacks an employer's financial and political supports. The other is the inside campaign, in which workers stay on the job but creatively undermine productivity.

Now Watts' union local

is six months into a prolonged battle that, as one area labor leader says, points the way to "the new labor movement."

As president of the 763-member Allied Industrial Workers local, Watts knew his employer—the 87-year old A.E. Staley Manufacturing Company—had been a tough but not unfair opponent for nearly 50 years. For most of the '80s, the union had energetically cooperated with managers in a quest for both productivity and safety at the plant, which processes corn into syrup, starches and related products.

But in 1988, Tate & Lyle, the British food products conglomerate, bought Staley. Staley replaced much of top management, intensified discipline, imposed harsher personnel policies and slashed the white-collar workforce by one-fourth. Management also ignored warnings of safety problems that led to the death of a former union leader and a \$1.6 million fine from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The warning signals continued to pile up. For example, Staley hired a new human relations manager who had been a notorious strikebreaker, expanded use of a hard-line anti-union law firm and signed a maintenance contract with a firm known for supplying strikebreakers. Managers began using the employee involvement program that the union had long supported to "steal what is in workers' heads" to create "striker replacement manuals," says Indiana University labor studies professor Mark Crouch, a union adviser.

Then last summer Staley began building a pipeline that could—in the event of a strike—transfer corn starch slurry from the nearby plant of Archer Daniels Midland, a major competitor of Staley that also owns 7.4 percent of Tate & Lyle.

Convinced by all these moves that Staley managers wanted to provoke a strike or lock out workers and then replace them, Watts called on Ray Rogers. The controversial 48-year-old Rogers is a proponent of "corporate campaigns" that seek pressure points on corporations beyond the strike picket line as a way to undermine management's base of power. Rogers, who was a central figure in the epic 1985-86 battle of Austin, Minn., meatpackers against Hormel (and against national union officers), also views corporate campaigns as a way to mobilize workers, to give them a sense of power and to build coalitions.

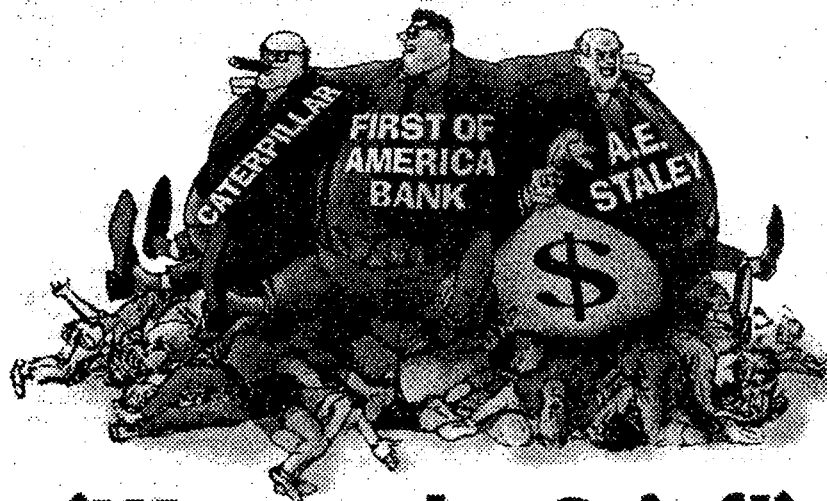
Local union members overwhelmingly voted last June to hire Rogers, despite his warnings that it wouldn't be easy to fight a \$6 billion multinational corporation. To carry on their fight, they virtually quintupled their dues to \$100 a month.

Then late last summer Rogers contacted Jerry Tucker, a former United Auto Workers (UAW) regional director and now leader of New Directions, a dissident UAW faction. In

At a plant in Decatur, Ill., union members are engaged in a battle with management that may point the way to a revived labor movement nationwide.

By David Moberg
DECATUR, ILL.

They get the Gold.



(We get the Grief!)

DON'T BANK ON COMMUNITY BASHING:

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In its corporate campaign, the union targeted a bank that had Staley's chairman on its board.

the early '80s Tucker was responsible for reviving and refining the age-old labor resistance tactics of thwarting management by simply "working to rule," that is, workers withholding normal creativity and effort and doing only what supervisors tell them to do. In such an "inside campaign," workers stay on the job after their contract expires and collect their paychecks without fear of being replaced by strikebreakers.

To build morale, Tucker encouraged workers to make symbolic statements such as wearing pro-union T-shirts or holding in-plant rallies. Taking advantage of legally protected rights to collective action, he advised workers to meet as a group with supervisors on every possible grievance, especially safety issues. In all these early inside campaigns, Tuck-

er could claim victory, including rehiring all fired workers. In one case, the factory seemed to be running normally, but productivity was down by 90 percent.

Formal slowdowns are not protected under federal labor law, but Tucker encourages pushing the edge of legal gray areas. He doesn't recommend sabotage, but "accidents" happen, as when a shipment from an auto parts factory intended for Ypsilanti arrived instead in Istanbul.

The battle at Staley is primarily over management's attempt to wrest from workers any control they now exercise over their work lives. Management wants to greatly reduce the value of seniority, weaken the grievance procedure, give supervisors extreme flexibility in assigning and evaluating workers and impose a rotating shift schedule of 12-hour shifts. Despite a small hike in the \$12 to \$15 hourly pay rates, workers would lose much overtime and premium pay.

Staley declared that talks were at an impasse when the old contract expired last September 30 and started imposing its last offer. It has since rejected mediation proposals. On March 15 it finally imposed the rotating shifts and, according to union estimates, brought more than 200 workers from its other factories to its Decatur facility to replace workers who resisted the new hours. But the union local stuck to its work-to-rule and corporate campaign strategies, and Staley sent back the "nannies" brought in to watch the Decatur workers.

This is not a tale of a beleaguered company barely clinging to survival, although Staley insists it needs the new contract to be competitive. Tate & Lyle has invested \$200 million in the Decatur plant (the biggest of 10 Staley factories). Over the past five years, Tate & Lyle has averaged a spectacular 22 percent return on all of its investments; its Staley subsidiary has been only slightly less profitable. Staley Vice-President J. Patrick Mohan admits the Decatur plant is profitable but claims that Tate & Lyle could make more money elsewhere.

Thanks to soaring productivity, the Staley workforce has shrunk by two-thirds while output has more than doubled over the past quarter century. Today's workers average 26 years seniority, about five times that of their supervisors, according to the union, and are skilled operators of a factory that technologically resembles a chemical plant or oil refinery.

Over the past five months, workers have been able to use their detailed understanding of how the factory functions to reduce the plant's output by nearly one-third, Staley officials said in February. As part of their inside campaign, union members minimize communication with foremen, file repeated grievances and federal complaints, and refuse to exert themselves. For example, "we don't give guidance" to supervisors on repairs or procedures, says Bob Flannigan Jr., who works in the corn-grinding department. "We let them do their job. They don't do a very good job." As a result, workers say, machinery has broken down, quality has suffered and production has dropped.

Although the company accused workers of sabotage, Steve Smith, a syrup refinery worker at Staley for 25 years, says, "That's one of the biggest lies. The only sabotage was letting them take care of it. We know what we're doing. They tell us what they want, and we get it there. If something doesn't work and they don't know it, instead of reminding them, you let them find out."

The corporate campaign, during which thousands of leaflets have been mailed to potential allies around the country and more than 150,000 leaflets distributed door to door in Decatur, has begun to bite as well. An early phase of the corporate campaign was a boycott of First of America Bank, a Michigan-based bank with branches in many Midwestern cities, including Decatur. As a result of the bad publicity and withdrawals from the bank, the chairman of Staley resigned from the bank's board. Building on that success, the campaign is now trying to force Mohan off the board of Magna Bank with a boycott. The UAW local representing workers at the Decatur Caterpillar factory cooperated by pulling \$100,000 out of the bank.

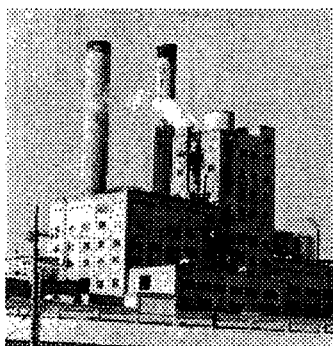
The union has also taken its case to Tate & Lyle's London stockholders' meeting and is linking up with Tate & Lyle unions worldwide to plan for mutual support over confrontations with the company. Now the union is asking consumers to boycott Tate & Lyle's premier sugars, Domino's, GW and Redpath.

Union leaders from the area, as well as Tucker and Rogers, are convinced that the double-whammy approach is powerful. "You can't do one without the other," Watts argues. "To do the corporate campaign without the in-plant strategy is only half effective. The company can impose their contract, but they can't make it work. Until they realize they need the workforce, they're going to lose." ◀

Up shift creek

A key contract issue in the Staley dispute is management's insistence on rotating shifts: 12-hour shifts, three days on and three days off, alternating days and nights each month. Management insists such schedules are becoming the norm in process industries and are necessary to remain competitive. Workers, on the other hand, claim such rotating shifts would be bad for their health, destroy their family lives, undermine their participation in community affairs and disrupt their continuing education. They also argue that it gives management total discretion and may both reduce productivity and disrupt current skilled operations.

Evidence does point to a trend toward rotating shifts in continuous process industries among non-union workers, who have no voice in the decision. Gordon Pavy, a researcher with the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, says unions have typically resisted rotating shifts, yet some have given in when management has made lucrative financial offers.

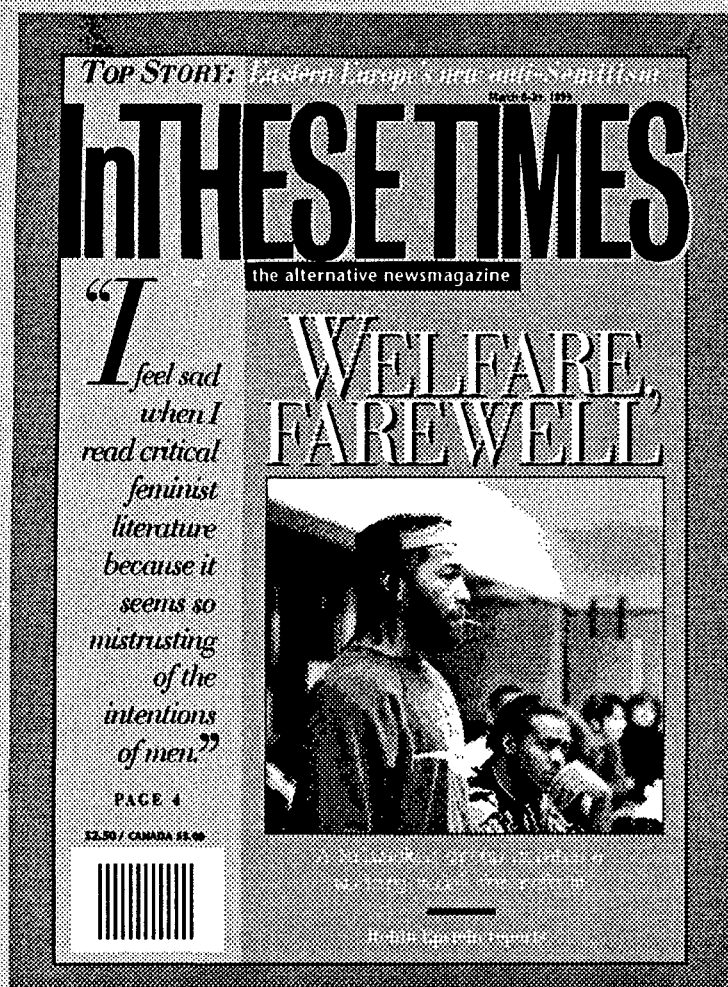


When University of Iowa labor studies professor Laurie Clements surveyed union locals in the corn wet milling industry about the Staley contract, "their reaction was just horror," he says. "Rather than reflecting a standard for the industry, they thought this upped the ante on the part of employers."

Currently, one-fifth of the nation's workforce is employed on non-traditional shift work, and the practice will likely increase as employers try to maximize the use of their investments, whether it's factory machinery, financial services or grocery superstores. Research shows, however, that shift work leads to increased accidents and injuries on the job, sleep disorders, more gastrointestinal and cardiovascular illness, pregnancy problems, interference with pharmacological treatments and various psychiatric disturbances.

The effects intensify with rotating shifts and with older workers, as at Staley. "It's much harder to work 12 hours, especially at night, so there are likely to be more accidents and mistakes with a longer shift," observes Charmane Eastman, a psychologist and shift work expert at Chicago's Rush Medical College. "In Staley's case, I agree with the workers that it's a bad idea. The company may think it's cheaper, but they'll pay for it if they make everyone unhappy and sick."

Charles Krone, a longtime Staley productivity consultant who praised the company's workers as a "pretty damn motivated, productive workforce," agrees. "You don't really need that shift rotation. You need a more cooperative freedom in crossing boundaries. Instead of rigid shifts, work becomes a process." About Staley's imposed contract, he adds, "I don't think that's the best way to go. It's not mature."



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EDUCATION

I'm normal; you're not

M

ulticultural education invites both trendy attention and serious concern. The media acknowledges the need to hear different voices, and politicians everywhere praise pluralistic democracy. Yet many scholars are up in arms over the denunciation of Western civilization courses, which are seen by multiculturalists as instruments of cultural imperialism. Clearly, indigination and the issues surrounding multiculturalism go hand in hand.

As educators who work with teachers across the country to make diversity a regular part of learning, we see the stress of cultural pluralism in human terms. It is not easy to create schools where diverse social, racial or religious groups are able to maintain their own identities and yet share a common educational purpose. People are frequently uncomfortable, confused and frustrated. Conflicts of

values, stereotypical thinking and mistrust are commonplace.

But this is exactly why multicultural education is needed. It offers approaches to teaching and learning that support the peaceful coexistence of diverse lifestyles, belief systems and language patterns. The intensification of awareness of human diversity in this country in the last decade is forcing us, as a nation, to consider what kind of society we want. If we want one in which all citizens can realize their potential, then we must create schools where the backgrounds and values of diverse students are acknowledged and where learning reflects the needs of such communities.

One might think that conservative political groups and human inertia would be the most powerful constraints on culturally responsive teaching. Yet the massive, apparently altruistic grip of conventional psychology on the structure and function of most schools in the U.S. is far more devastating. With its language, tests, labels and strict

adherence to a quantitative scientific method, the psychological framework of most schools prevents flexibility. When psychology defines normality according to empirically based evidence and mathematically determined standards, educators, often unwittingly, carry restrictive assumptions about mental health and ability. Psychological tests and tracking further marginalize underrepresented students, as do the psychologically determined use of irreversible labels such as "learning disabled" and the insidious requirement that further psychologically oriented testing and methods of assistance be employed. Far too much of this presumes that dysfunction is located in an individual as opposed to a possibly defective system.

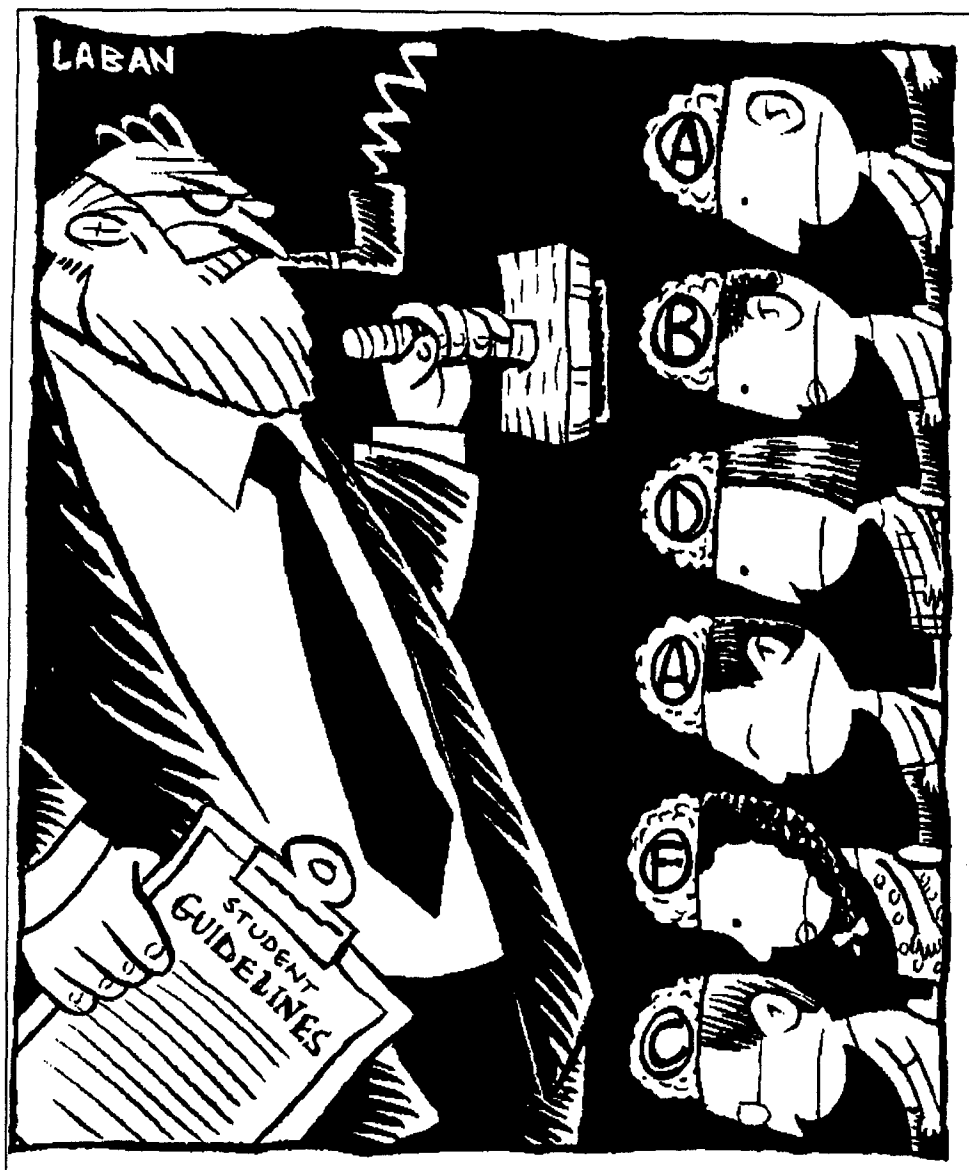
Euro-American values dominate the field of psychology and their cultural assumptions are accepted as universal. Cultures where alternative assumptions apply are considered abnormal. As Paul Pederson has written, modern psychology has failed to escape from a narrow frame of cultural values characteristic of the Eurocentric middle-class males who dominate the field.

Most psychologists gloss over the fact that most of the world's people do not accept the basic assumptions of their discipline. Some serious differences between Western and non-Western thinking, for example, are achievement orientation versus the annihilation of desire; individual self-direction and independence versus interdependence and guidance from others; a belief in progress and control versus a belief in finding one's place in the environment. This contrast oversimplifies both systems, but it points out that what educators take to be psychological norms are rejected by many students.

Consider, for example, the issue of ability. For almost

*Like a huge
driftnet,
the current
system of
psychological
testing catches
those who fit
and destroys
those who
don't.*

By Raymond J.
Wlodkowski and
Margery B. Ginsberg



100 years, psychologists from Alfred Binet on have imposed a Eurocentric definition of intelligence, along with the idea that ability can be measured mathematically. School systems are organized to test and categorize children on these bases. The tests are carried out by school psychologists and supported through state legislation that provides extra funding for students labeled "learning disabled," "developmentally disabled," or "gifted and talented."

Like a cottage industry supercharged into a multinational industrial complex, psychologists, psychological testing and psychological categorization permeate education and control its language. Even parents describe their children with psychologically derived labels. Essentially, we have a highly sophisticated culture of difference in our schools. Unfortunately, it has nothing to do with a heavily pluralistic society of unique, cooperative and critically aware citizens.

With such psychological labeling as "learning disabled" and "behaviorally disordered," the field of psychology contributes to a codification of children that places responsibility

for their behavior solely upon them and their families and often leads to a form of treatment from which they can never escape. Psychological labeling allows educators to ignore student interests and needs. This affects all students, for a system that supports only a status quo population and is unprepared to identify and negotiate its own injustices fails everyone. Like a huge driftnet, the current system captures and processes those considered most valuable, simultaneously destroying those who do not fit. Currently, there is no escape from the intimidation and control of psychological specialists who interpret behavior in a way that excludes the views of those categorized, the criticism of everyday people and the richness of other disciplines.

Teachers conform too frequently to "psychologically derived" standards of success. Such adherence takes precedence over their examination of different approaches to teaching or circumstances that might contribute to or reduce success. "Correctness," defined in terms of other students and the subtlety of institutional sanctions, rewards obedience to unquestioned and unexamined norms.

The strongest proof that schools disproportionately reward the values and behaviors of the dominant culture is the high drop-out rate among people of color—especially those whose families have experienced generations of inequality.

If the field of modern psychology does not open itself to consideration of alternative values and accept its own incomplete understanding, then it will continue to perpetuate implicit cultural bias and disparity. ◀

Raymond J. Wlodkowski and Margery B. Ginsberg are educational consultants in Boulder, Colo.

This article is part of continuing series on education edited by Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The series, "Notes from the Back of the Class," covers a wide range of education-related issues. Contributions from readers are welcome. Manuscripts of no more than 1,000 words should be sent to Alex Molnar, c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

IN THE ARTS

No place like home

Around the rancho where most of *Like Water for Chocolate* takes place, revolution is coming to a boil—just like the water of the title, a Mexican phrase that describes not only the brewing of hot chocolate but of passion.

Inside the rancho, ruled by stern Mama Elena, revolution of a sort is simmering in the kitchen as well. Elena's youngest daughter Tita has been consigned by family tradition to remain unmarried in order to serve her mother. Tita's lover Pedro, in despair, marries her eldest sister Rosaura so he can be close to Tita.

They're not exactly one big happy family in this fantastical Mexican saga, set in the early part of this century, but Tita does what she can to adjust. As a gifted cook, she throws herself into her creations for the table. Magical realism results, and director Alfonso Arau handles it as gracefully, even naturally, as any director has. Working from

the screenplay by his wife Laura Esquivel, who adapted her own novel (see *In These Times*, Nov. 30, 1992), Arau simply treats the super-real like the everyday.

Tita's suppressed emotions emerge in her culinary feats. When her tears fall into the dishes she is preparing for the wedding feast, all the guests suffer a gastric version of her distress. When she cooks quail in rose petal sauce using the bouquet her lover-turned-brother-in-law has given her, those who eat the dish get the hots rather than the trots. Tita's older sister Gertrudis is so inflamed that the bathhouse around her catches fire, as does the heart of a dashing revolutionary passing by. He carries her off to a new life.

Tita's sister Rosaura grows increasingly bitter and demanding through the years of her loveless marriage, and Tita's resentment finds its way, perhaps inadvertently, into Rosaura's diet. The eldest sister comes down with a lingering and finally terminal case of

indigestion and flatulence.

Tita's newfound power does not free her from the kitchen, however. *Like Water for Chocolate* is more about the triumph of the feminine than the feminist. The kitchen, that central room of the family home, becomes Tita's undisputed domain—a separate but equal realm, you might say—from which she is able to free the next generation of the family, her niece.

Rosaura's daughter Esperanza, whose name translates to "hope," is the narrator of *Like Water for Chocolate*. Her wedding to a man she loves provides the occasion for Tita's final orgy of cooking.

That a woman as often the instrument of another woman's oppression is a painful fact often left out of rosy feminist tales about family life; *Like Water for Chocolate* highlights it. Regina Torne's performance as the brutal but inwardly tormented Mama Elena earned her the top Mexican film prize (one of several for the film). But how did they overlook Lumi Cavazos (whose name must surely have something to do with "luminous")? As Tita, she lights up every corner of the movie.

Iris, another oppressed daughter, is the title charac-



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The Match Factory Girl
Directed by Aki Kaurismaki

Like Water for Chocolate
Directed by Alfonso Arau

From Mexico and Finland come two movies about women on the verge of liberation.

By Pat Dowell



Lumi Cavazos and
Marco Leonardo in
*Like Water
for Chocolate*.

Previous page:
Kati Outinen in *The
Match Factory Girl*.

ter of *The Match Factory Girl*, a movie as spare and terse as *Like Water for Chocolate* is abundant and rhapsodic.

Perhaps it's the difference between growing up Finnish and Mexican. Or maybe it's just the aesthetic of Aki Kaurismäki, who may be the most deadpan director alive, as suggested by the title of his

most recently imported comedy, *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*. His avowed inspiration for *The Match Factory Girl*—completed, like *Cowboys*, in 1989, but just now playing in U.S. theaters—was to make filmdom's famed ascetic Robert Bresson "seem like a director of epic action pictures."

Kaurismäki has succeeded, for this is a malicious and macabre reverie on conformity and its discontents. Deceptively simple and quiet, its very bleakness is a kind of manifesto tacked to the arthouse theater door.

The last of a trilogy on Finland's working class, *The Match Factory Girl* begins with a shot of a large log being reduced to matches. At the end of the long mechanical assembly line stands Iris, whose job it is, after all the work is done by machines, to make sure the labels are firmly attached to the matchboxes. In the next 70 minutes, Kaurismäki will demonstrate that human nature is not so easily contained.

Pale and lonely Iris, who cries at Marx Brothers movies and looks like an angel with insomnia, dutifully brings home

her paycheck to her TV-deadened parents. Every night she visits the local dance club, where a mournful crooner longs for impossible dreamlands. Iris, played with virtually mute eloquence by Kati Outinen, is never asked to dance until she buys herself a red dress.

This simple act of consumer independence leads her down a slippery slope—dance with a stranger, one-night stand, pregnancy, rejection by the unreceptive object of her desire and ejection from her parents' house. In short, it sets her life in motion.

But it ends others, for irate Iris soon visits a pharmacy to buy rat poison, from which she prepares a handy purse-sized vial of revenge, ready for her old enemies and any potential new ones who might try to make her acquaintance. Like the night-blooming flower she admires in a local conservatory, Iris herself is most vividly alive when her darkest impulses are liberated. Her brief emergence ends, like the flower's, after a single night, and fateful visits to spike the drinks and vittles of those who have hurt her.

Both *The Match Factory Girl* and *Like Water for Chocolate* are tales of stunted liberation. Tita sublimates her heart's desire—as so many of us do—into food, and when her dreams of a life with Pedro finally come true in the movie's surprisingly pyrotechnic end, their passion literally consumes them.

Director Arau and writer Esquivel celebrate permanent arousal without release; with satisfaction comes the end of Tita's life. And yet the film also venerates the continuity and the value of family—even an oppressive family. Esquivel, after all, based the story on a piece of her own family history.

Kaurismäki's film, a sardonic comedy that might be mistaken for a tragedy, is a different kettle of herring altogether. Iris seems to have no life at all until she has death to dispense. She flares up for a moment to extinguish others' lights, and heads off into the darkness of certain imprisonment, her unloved existence a testament to the hypocrisy of "home." *Like Water for Chocolate* goes down easier, but there may be more nourishment for the rebellious in the wicked story of *The Match Factory Girl*. ◀

IN PRINT

Help yourself

By David Futrelle

Back in the days when self-help books were written mainly for men, their promise was simple: they would enable all those willing to follow a few simple rules the chance to master the world. The titles of the books told much of the story: *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, *You Can if You Think You Can*. In his best-selling book, *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill reduced the formula to its bare essence. "READ YOURSELF INTO A FORTUNE," a headline on the back cover triumphantly announces. "If you learn and apply the simple basic techniques revealed here, you will have mastered the secret of true and lasting success. AND YOU MAY HAVE WHATEVER YOU WANT IN LIFE."

For the most part, these books are different now. They're more personal, more psychological, more, well, feminine: one publisher's survey determined that 85 percent of the vastly popular "codependency" manuals are bought by women. They now promise not success but recovery. "When love doesn't work," the inside cover of one popular book announces, "this book provides the support you need." The books—filled with a breezy, yet earnest, mix of common sense and psychobabble—are easy enough to ridicule. Even the titles invite parody: *Women Who Love Too Much*; *Women Men Love*, *Women Men Leave*; *Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them*. Most women, even those who are avid readers of the genre, consider the bulk of these books beneath them, a kind of intellectual junk food. Yet they sell and sell.

Over the last few years, while trying to come to terms with the omnipresence of psychological language and ideas in American culture, I've picked up my share of self-help manuals, most of them written expressly for women. I'd like to say I've done so merely for the purposes of research, but that's just not true. However much I resist their lures, I find myself drawn into these books—though badly written, they

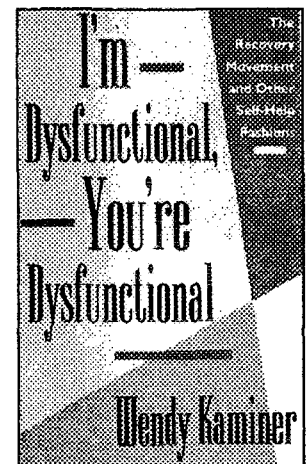
do describe real problems, and mixed in with all the gimmicks and lists are a few good pieces of advice. Like Cynthia Heimel, a usually cynical *Village Voice* columnist who bought *Women Who Love Too Much* just "to understand the frenzy," but soon found herself "compulsively turning the pages and nodding [her] head in recognition," I can't maintain my defiance for long.

I do, of course, have standards. I read *Women Who Love Too Much* (carefully hiding the cover when I read it on the train), but I'm never going to read its sequel, *Letters from Women Who Love Too Much*. And I refuse to mutter even the most innocuous "affirmations." I consider self-help books a guilty pleasure that, frankly, isn't much of a pleasure. But I read them.

Self-help books have inspired scads of criticism, and much of it, admittedly, is deserved. They're routinely denounced as "drivel," as a sign of dangerous self-indulgence, as part of an antifeminist backlash. In *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional*, Wendy Kaminer offers a book-length version of this critique, extending her range beyond the self-help genre to take in the "recovery" movement as a whole. The book, slender, intelligent and witty (if sometimes infuriating), began as a combative polemic in the *New York Times Book Review*, and it's likely to annoy as much as it entertains.

Kaminer doesn't have much sympathy for either the books or the movement. "I have read self-help books only as a critic, not as a seeker," she announces with a huff, "and I was rarely engaged by the books that I read ... except as a critic." She finds the notion of "codependency" vaguely absurd, and considers 12-step groups a kind of revivalist religion masquerading as therapy. "When I criticize the movement I am usually accused of being 'in denial,'" she notes, "as I might once have been accused of heresy."

As heretics go, though, Kaminer can be pretty entertaining. In a chapter entitled "The Recovery Boutique," Kaminer recounts her experiences at a recent recovery conference—watching in bemused dismay as fellow workshop participants write gooey love letters to their "inner children" ("Dear Honeybunch, I love your wide-eyed innocence"), lis-



I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions

By Wendy Kaminer
Addison-Wesley
180 pp., \$18.95

Women and Self-Help Culture: Reading Between the Lines
By Wendy Simonds
Rutgers University Press
267 pp., \$14

political realm.

She's right about this: political candidates, like television preachers and celebrities before them, feel obligated to describe their own personal recoveries in gory detail—Paul Tsongas' recovery from cancer, Al Gore's sufferings with his injured son—as if these stories matter more than political ideology or record. Even wars, these days, are a continuation of self-help by other means. "The Persian Gulf war, like a good self-help program, cured us of our 'Vietnam syndrome' and 'gave us back our pride,' as General Motors hopes to do with Chevrolets," Kaminer acidly notes. "The culture of recovery is insidious: now the moral measure of a war is how it makes us feel about ourselves."

Unfortunately, though, Kaminer's attack on the excesses and imbecilities of self-help culture slips all too easily into a misguided, and frequently mean-spirited, dismissal of psychology as a whole. She has neither sympathy for, nor real understanding of, the therapeutic process—claiming, in one breath, "not [to be] impugning therapy," but in the next breath dismissing the practice as little more than a personal indulgence. "Most of us do love to talk about ourselves," she remarks blithely, "although I've always regarded it as a slightly illicit pleasure or one you pay for by the hour."

Now, it may be distressing to hear psychological insights mangled by celebrity psyche-healers on *Oprah*, and to see shoddy self-help books promise salvation through simplistic formulas, but this doesn't mean that psychological suffering

is itself a fraudulent notion. In one particularly disgraceful section of the book, Kaminer contrasts the (presumably inconsequential) sufferings of people in recovery with the "real" suffering of Cambodian refugees. The logic behind the comparison is as absurd as it is offensive—as if the undeniable reality of political terror simply cancels out the more subtle (though no less real) fact of psychological pain.

I'm tired of hearing psychological ignorance touted as radical critique. I've watched many of those closest to me struggle through severe cases of clinical depression, mania and schizophrenia, and I know from my own personal experience how debilitating chronic depression can be. Seeking help for such problems—from therapy, from medication, from recovery groups, even from books—is hardly, as Kaminer thinks, a sign of cowardice or dependency, but a step, however tentative, towards real independence and away from a life dominated by self-hatred and irrational compulsions.

Kaminer presents her book as a progressive critique of what she clearly regards as a middle-class indulgence. But her attack on our culture's "pervasive fascination with victimhood" echoes the most regressive dismissals of oppression: Dinesh D'Souza, after all, made his name denouncing the allegedly self-indulgent "victim chic" of the left. Ultimately, Kaminer's message is cruder than the crudest of the old self-help books: Just Cheer Up! ◀

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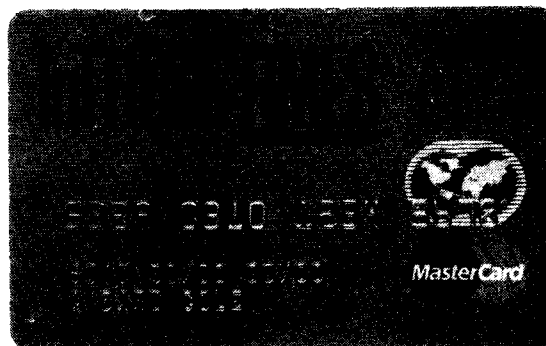
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Mad habits

By Phyllis Eckhaus

In 1954, while the House Un-American Activities Committee engaged in a witch-hunt for Red devils, another congressional cabal convened to root out ghouls, crypt-keepers and other corrupters of American youth via comic books.

A foolhardy young comic book entrepreneur, William M. Gaines, volunteered to testify. Gaines had enthusiastically transformed his dad's educational comic book company ("Picture Stories from the Bible") into a thriving pulp-mill of horror and sci-fi fantasy. Naively defending the artistry and imagination of comics like *Weird Science* and *Tales from the Crypt*, Gaines succeeded in driving the nails through his own coffin, so to speak. The committee listened unbelievably as Gaines explained that a cover illustration of an ax murderer with a woman's severed head was in "good taste." (Bad taste, he claimed, "could be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen as dripping blood.")



Completely Mad: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine

By Maria Reidelbach

Little, Brown

208 pp., \$24.95

In the midst of the *mishegoss*, Harvey Kurtzman, editor of Gaines' satirical comic book *Mad*, got an offer at a respectable glossy magazine. To keep the ambitious Kurtzman happy, Gaines offered to convert *Mad* from a comic book to a magazine, replete with typeset text. This serendip-

itous suggestion proved *Mad's* salvation—by turning *Mad* into a magazine, Gaines inadvertently circumvented oversight by the Comics Code Authority.

I like to imagine that *Mad*, illegitimate stepchild of the Comics Code, is possessed of the power to warp young minds into perpetual rebellion against authority, sham and injustice. Maria Reidelbach, author of *Completely Mad*, clearly shares my fantasy. She fills her *Mad* history with testimonials from the likes of Tom Hayden and Gloria Steinem, giving witness to *Mad's* liberating insolence.

Certainly, the original *Mad* makers listed leftward. Kurtzman, *Mad's* creator, who died earlier this year at the age of 68, was himself a "red diaper" baby who began his career with a teenage apprenticeship with *Daily Worker* cartoonist Louie Furstadt. Kurtzman left *Mad* in 1956, but his oeuvre includes some of the magazine's most subversive strips, like his "Walt Dizzy," in which Mickey Mouse's friends are dragged away by brawny police dogs for failing to wear white gloves, and a 1954 story ridiculing "Joe McCartaway" as a huckster peddling ludicrous allegations and doctored evidence.

Kurtzman's anarchic, truth-seeking sensibility defied easy political definition. Even as a child, he found the *Daily Worker* "disagreeable, ideologically and visually," as he later told historian Paul Buhle. In the '60s, when *Mad's* brand of irreverence had seeped deeply into the counterculture, Kurtzman cringed at his newfound status as guru to Yuppies and hippies.

Like Kurtzman, *Mad's* simply too good to propagate propaganda, and it's unlikely that the magazine has been very effective in breeding little leftists. My brother Pete and his friends cherished *Mad* almost from their infancy; as adults, they are gun-toting Reaganites. *Mad* offers such a lavish smorgasbord of allusion and invention that one can feast forever without ingesting a particular political message—though the message is there for those who seek it.

Mad presents itself as a haven for misfits and outcasts, welcoming everyone to participate in a big inside joke. There's nothing deliberately mean about *Mad's* brand of satire. While the magazine's political humor sometimes has an edge, the barbs lobbed at readers serve, like affectionate nicknames, to create a bond of closeness, to promote an atmosphere of almost indiscriminate inclusivity.

Completely Mad is as much a celebration as a history—a richly illustrated coffee-table paperback designed for browsing. The snazzy but disjointed layout makes it hard to do more than browse—which turns out to be a blessing in disguise, since Reidelbach's trivia-packed and sometimes superficial text is best appreciated in small doses.

Still, *Completely Mad* is wonderful. Like the *Mad* "Specials" that endlessly recycle timeless shtick from the magazine's past, *Completely Mad* shamelessly appropriates pages and pages of *Mad's* best stuff. Those once nourished on *Mad* will savor this book and hunger for more. ◀

Phyllis Eckhaus lives in Brooklyn.

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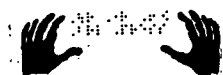
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Continued from page 40

Consider *Grand Canyon*, Meg and Lawrence Kasdan's 1991 tale of spiritual dislocation in traffic-bound Los Angeles. Probably a third of the film takes place in or around automobiles. Old friends have heart-to-heart talks, fathers and sons share their deepest emotions, and men and women find love—all inside various stretch limos, sports cars and family vans. It's the car as a middle-class living room on wheels, an image that is not too far from the truth given the dimension of America's auto addiction.

Yet cars, according to the Kasdans, are where bad things increasingly happen to good people. Caught in a typical L.A. traffic jam after attending a basketball game, the Kevin Kline character takes a detour through a rough part of town

where his car promptly dies, leaving him stranded and exposed to the elements. Quicker than you can say Reginald Denny, he is surrounded by a pack of nighttime marauders searching for prey. In another scene, Steve Martin—playing a Hollywood producer of ultra-violent B-flicks—steps out of an expensive red sports car only to be accosted by a robber who demands his money and then shoots him in the leg. And Mary-Louise Parker, as a lovelorn secretary, becomes the victim of a smash-and-grab robbery when she stops at an intersection.

Cars no longer spirit their occupants from danger, but place them in harm's way. Perhaps the most telling moment occurs when the angst-ridden Kline character leads his son onto L.A.'s mean streets to teach him how to drive. The result is reminiscent of the talks "Judge" Lewis Stone used to have with Mickey Rooney in the old Andy Hardy series, only hipper and more frazzled. As horns blare and psychopathic motorists give each other the finger, Kline tells the rattled teenager, with only slight exaggeration: "It's crazy out there, you gotta react really fast. ... Making a left turn in L.A. is one of the harder things you're going to learn in life."

Grand Canyon, however, is merely a warm-up for Joel Schumacher's infinitely more powerful hit film, *Falling Down*. As everyone must know by now, the movie opens with a perfect vision of highway hell: Michael Douglas as a laid-off missile engineer who's caught in yet another L.A. traffic jam and is ready to blow. Kids scream, adults jabber into cellular phones and steam rises off hot metal. Engines rev, yet have nowhere to go. But the Douglas character does the unexpected. He opens the door, gets out and walks away. Abandoning his car is a first step to reasserting control. It's an absurd response to an anarchic existence, which is why it ends up in disaster.

From Lewis Mumford on, urbanologists have warned that overreliance on the car was resulting in the creation of a social chasm between those with the means to go about on wheels and down-and-outers condemned to a life on foot. Yet what's become clear by this late date is how this system of economic apartheid not only penalizes the poor but the supposed beneficiaries as well. No longer kings of the road, middle-class motorists are trapped by congestion in what are essentially motorized isolation chambers. The economy is eroding while the rapidly expanding ranks of the carless press all around, tapping on the windshield and demanding to be let in.

Goodbye open road—hello carjackings, urban riots and the misery of the endless traffic jam. As Vincent Canby pointed out in the *New York Times*, one of the many things that make *Falling Down* so startling is the recurrent image of a middle-class white man striding about in places where no middle-class white man would normally go, at least not without his car. Michael Douglas plays a man who decides to go face-to-face with the wreckage of the American urban economy, caused in no small measure by excessive motorization. Needless to say, the experience helps drive him over the brink. ◀

CALENDAR

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► SAN FRANCISCO

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"Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media," directed by Peter Wintonick and Mark Achbar, Canada, 1992—a special one-week engagement at the Castro Theater (429 Castro Street). Funny, provocative and surprisingly accessible, *Manufacturing Consent* explores the political life and ideas of Noam Chomsky, the world-renowned linguist, intellectual and political activist. In a dynamic collage of new and original footage, biography, archival gems, imaginative graphics and outrageous illustrations, the film highlights Chomsky's probing analysis of mass-media. Part One focuses on the theory and practice of thought control in democratic societies. Drawing on wide-ranging and persuasive examples, Chomsky asserts that media create a false political consensus that undermines true democracy. In Part Two, "Activating Dissent," he posits that we must undertake a "course of intellectual defense" to give meaning back to the democratic process. Opening night, April 9, is a benefit for KPFA and the Middle East Children's Alliance. There will be a special reception with celebrity actors

and activists including Martin Sheen, Danny Glover and Debra Chasnoff at 7 p.m. For benefit information, call (510) 548-0542.

► CHICAGO

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35th Annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington Dinner honoring Julian Bond, veteran civil rights leader and historian, and Mollie L. West, National Board member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and Executive Board member of the International Typographers Union Local 16. Featured speaker, Dr. Linda Murray, Medical Director of the Winfield Moody Health Center and veteran universal health care activist, speaking on "Universal Health Care: A Long Time Overdue." At the McCormick Hotel, 22nd and Lake Shore Drive, at 6 p.m. Tickets \$35, \$60 with message in program book. Contact Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee, Chicago 60647, (312) 384-0327.

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I N T H E E N D

Road to nowhere

By Daniel Lazare

Ever since the first flapper climbed into the first rumble seat, Hollywood has celebrated the automobile as an instrument of adventure and liberation. Henry Fonda fled the Dustbowl in one in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Robert Mitchum took on the mob and the feds in one in the cult classic *Thunder Road*, while Burt Reynolds outraced the law in *Smokey and the Bandit*.

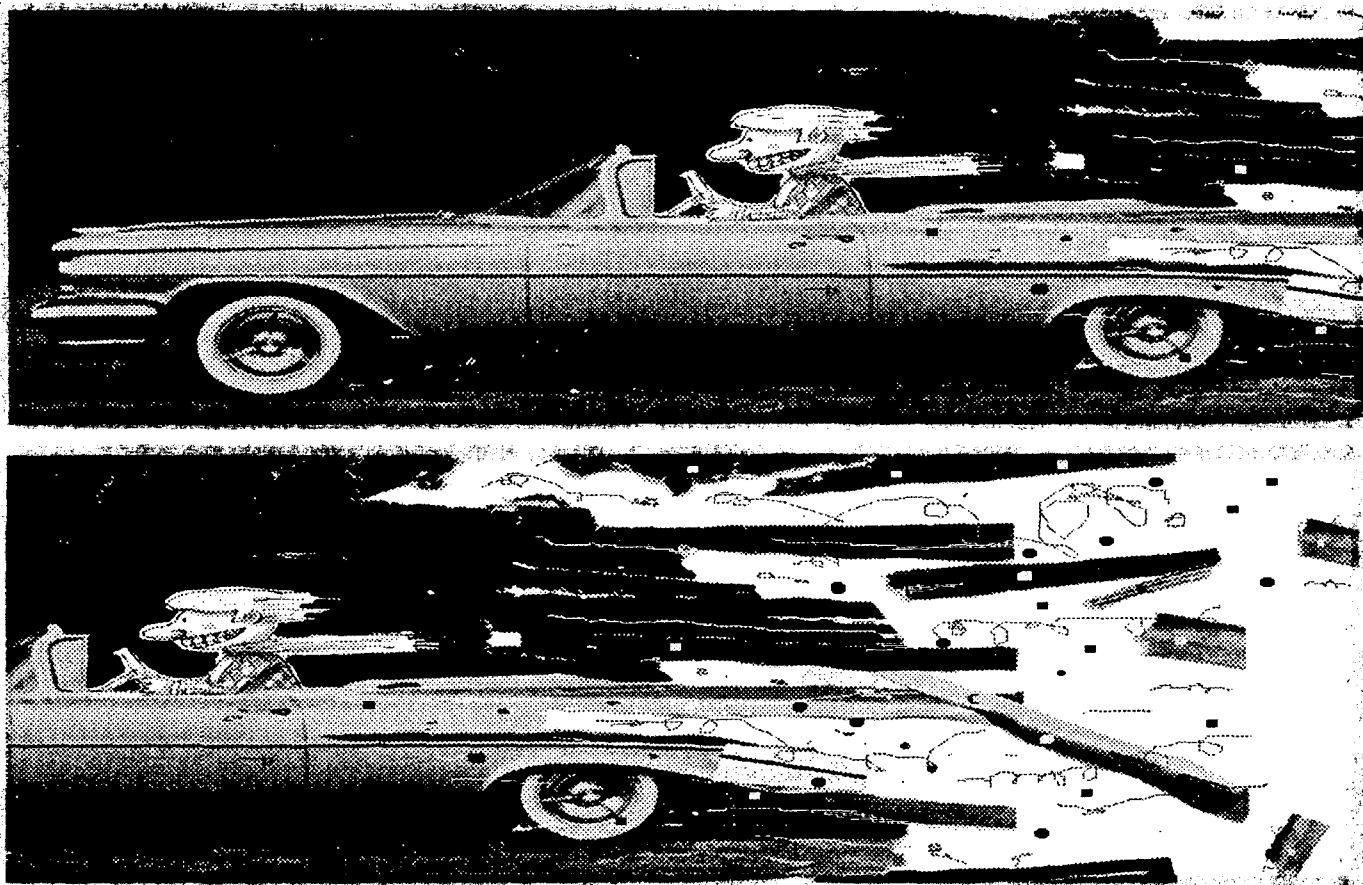
Cars meant independence, emancipation, the wind racing through your hair, the romance of the open road. Moreover, even when road pictures ended badly, as in *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Thelma and Louise*, it didn't upset the central thesis. If auto-borne liberation was fleeting, it was all the more precious as a consequence. Freedom is expensive,

but, as Hollywood assured us over and over again, it was worth it.

The same, of course, goes for the rest of American pop culture, from songs like the Beach Boys' "Little GTO" to TV series like *Route 66* and countless ads celebrating the joys of tooling around in one of Detroit's latest pleasure machines. The car was the crucial nexus in the "Fordist" industrial economy, as Michel Aglietta and other economists have pointed out, the connecting thread linking centers of production and centers of organized mass consumption. But it was also central to the peculiarly American concept of freedom, in which increasingly oppressive social and political institutions were deemed beyond change and the only answer was escape. Thus putting pedal to the metal and heading out into the latter-day frontier became something of a basic political right.

But then something happened. Somewhere in the early '90s, Hollywood's depiction of the automobile underwent a huge shift. Instead of a means of liberation, the car emerged as something very different—a trap, or an increasingly onerous ball and chain. Instead of racing along an endless highway, motor vehicles now seemed to spend the bulk of their existence mired in congestion. Instead of romance and freedom, the car now seemed to be a ticket to urban hell. Americans felt themselves to be prisoners in a system that was out of their control.

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